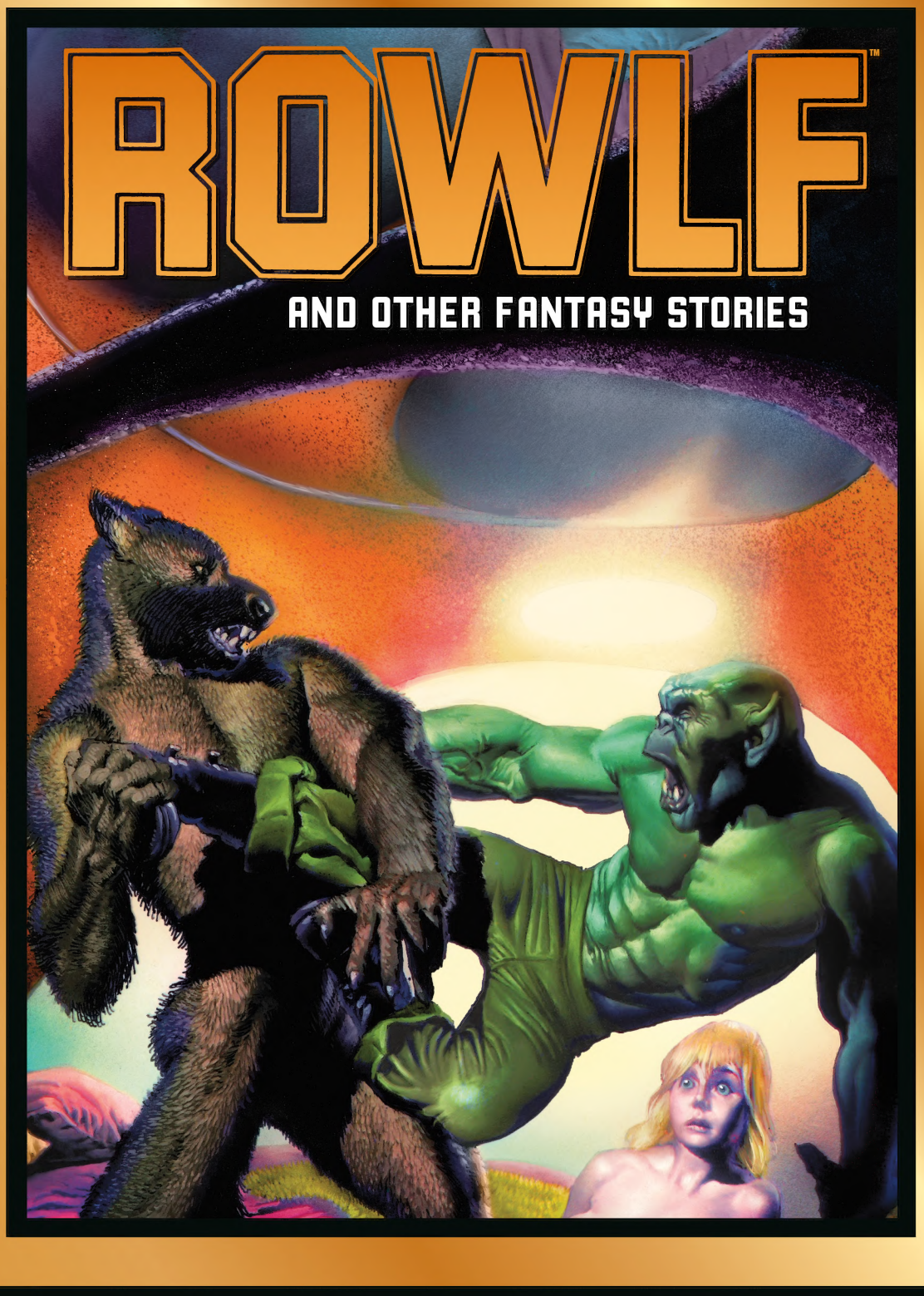

RICHARD CORBEN

©1979
Corben

Rowlf #1 Second Printing Front Cover Art

ROWLF™

AND OTHER FANTASY STORIES

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Letters

THE STORY OF ROWLF

THE BEAST OF WOLFTON

THE SPIRIT OF THE BEAST

THE STORY OF OTEG

DARK HORSE BOOKS

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ROWLF AND OTHER FANTASY STORIES

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FOREWORD

HAYAO MIYAZAKI

I chanced upon *Rowlf* around the time I was wondering what to do for my next work after I had completed *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro*. Thinking I would like to create an animation film based on *Rowlf*, I made an offer for a film treatment through the production company. But, unfortunately, the rights negotiations for adapting it into a film did not go well, and this plan vanished. In those days I was a newcomer as a film director, having made just one film. It seems that the hurdle to gaining an agreement was too high.

It is truly lamentable that Richard Corben has passed away. But the reissue of this work of his, which will be read by new readers, is fortunate. I have been requested to write the foreword to this volume. I am honored. As I thought about what I should write, I realized that it would be most appropriate if I used a section of the proposal for the film project for Rowlf that I wrote forty-four years ago. I quote it here with deep appreciation for Mr. Corben.

PROPOSAL TO ACQUIRE FILM RIGHTS: NOVEMBER 1980

About the Original Work

Richard Corben is currently one of the leading comic book artists in America. *Rowlf*, which he created and self-published in 1971, was one of his first works, but it is also, without a doubt, one of his most famous. With *Rowlf*, Corben has succeeded in succinctly showing what a true modern fairy tale should be.

In *Rowlf*, a world that appears at first to be grotesque and ironic is actually filled with faith in a healthy life. The story possesses the power of old fairy tales—the ability to encourage people, to reassure us and give us hope. It's no exaggeration to say that it is rare to see such a work today.

Highlights

- Canisland, which resembles medieval Europe.
- The tanks and ray guns used by the demons in the world of castles and sorcerers.
- Dramatic staging, including the desert, upon which Rowlf's tank casts long shadows; the pillboxes and bunkers in the demon castle; etc.
- The powerfully muscled demon leader, who fights using karate and is so loathsomely evil he seems impossible to kill.
- Rowlf's fabulous transformation from dog to human.
- The heroine, Maryara. She has the appeal of a healthy young woman from the countryside.
- Rowlf is unconditionally devoted to his mistress, Maryara, but audiences will be particularly inspired and impressed as he becomes more self-aware, learns to stand on his own feet, and eventually matures to the point where he can take on the demon.
- For today's young people—who feel overmanaged, overprotected, and suffocated by society, and thus are increasingly neurotic—this story would be the ideal present.

Hayao Miyazaki

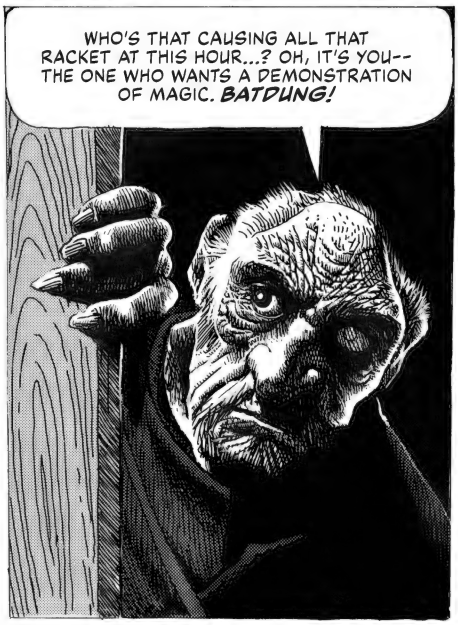
The story of

Rowlf

IN THE LAND OF CANIS, PEACE AND TRANQUILITY REIGNED. THE PEOPLE, MAINLY PEASANT FARMERS AND CASTLE SERVANTS, LOVED THE ELDERLY RULER. THE KING HAD A DAUGHTER, MARYARA, WHO WAS WONDROUSLY FAIR TO LOOK UPON. THE GIRL WAS OF AN AGE TO RECEIVE SUITORS, AND HER FATHER ENCOURAGED HER, FOR THE SAKE OF HER FUTURE SUBJECTS, TO MAKE A WISE CHOICE. SOME CAME TO COURT HER WITH HOPE OF GAINING A HANDSOME DOWRY, UNTIL THEY LEARNED THAT CANIS, ALTHOUGH HAPPY, WAS A RATHER POOR LAND. HOWEVER, RAYMON WAS CONVINCED THAT ONCE HE WAS IN POWER, HE COULD CHANGE THINGS...

...EXCEPT FOR **ROWLF.** MARYARA WAS EXTREMELY FOND OF HER FAITHFUL WOLF-DOG. ROWLF LOVED HIS MISTRESS TO THE LIMIT OF HIS CAPACITY. BUT HE HATED MARYARA'S SUITORS, ESPECIALLY RAYMON.

I HAVE A VERY SPECIAL SURPRISE FOR YOU TODAY. WE'RE GOING TO SEE SORTRUM THE WIZARD. I'VE PERSUADED HIM TO GIVE US A DEMONSTRATION OF HIS OCCULT POWERS.
THAT SHOULD BE VERY INTERESTING, RAYMON.



THE DOG DIDN'T TRUST THE TWO MEN, AND INTENDED TO WATCH THE PROCEEDINGS.
I WILL SHOW YOU SOMETHING THAT NO OTHER HUMAN HAS WITNESSED. MOBILAMORPH! I, SORTRUM THE SORCERER, WILL CHANGE THE FORM OF ONE CREATURE INTO ONE THAT IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!
SEE THIS SILLY LITTLE CAT! HIS ROLE IN LIFE SHALL SOON BE ALTERED... THERE, SIT STILL, LITTLE KITTY.
GORATH-SUMNO BON, NIKTO MORADA....
PUFF
POFF
BONAR PUTHNABORAT - FELINEOHSARUM MOBILA VESPERTILION BATALLINEOUS!
EEK
EEK
EEK
EEK
EEK
HEH! HEH! HEH! LOOK AT 'EM GO!
EEEEEAAAAH!
WUF WUF
NOK
KLUNK
NO! NO!
EEK
EEK
RUF
SNAP
BUMP

ROWLF IS THE STUPIDEST DOG IN THE WORLD! YARA, YOU SHOULD GET RID OF HIM.
DON'T BE SO MEAN TO HIM. HE WAS ONLY TRYING TO PROTECT ME FROM THAT BAT. WHY DON'T YOU MAKE FRIENDS WITH HIM?
GROAWRRR
YE GODS! HE'D TAKE MY ARM OFF IF I GAVE HIM HALF A CHANCE!
IT'S JUST BECAUSE HE'S SO UPSET. I'M GOING TO STAY OUT HERE WITH HIM FOR A WHILE.
GOOD, YOU DO THAT. BUT I'M STILL GOING TO TALK TO YOUR FATHER ABOUT GETTING RID OF HIM. NOW I MUST SPEAK TO SORTRUM AND TRY TO UNDO THE DAMAGE ROWLF HAS DONE. THE WIZARD IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF CANISLAND.

IT WAS A PLEASANT, WARM DAY IN CANISLAND, MUCH TOO NICE FOR THE DREARY PROCEEDINGS AT THE HOUSE OF SORTRUM. RECALLING THE INNOCENT JOYS OF CHILDHOOD, MARYARA LONGED TO BE FREE OF HER FORTHCOMING RESPONSIBILITY.

OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL POOL! IT LOOKS LIKE THE ONE I SWAM IN AS A LITTLE GIRL.
IT IS RATHER WARM TODAY. THAT COOL WATER LOOKS SO INVITING.
I'LL DO IT! YOU'LL KEEP A WATCH OUT FOR ME, WON'T YOU, ROWLFY? WARN ME IF ANYONE APPROACHES.
HA, HA, HA! STOP WATCHING, YOU NAUGHTY DOG!
AAAAHH! THIS IS WONDERFUL!

AS YARA PLAYED IN THE WATER, SOMETHING EVIL WATCHED.
ROWLF BECAME SUDDENLY ALERT TO THE PRESENCE.
ROWLF, WHAT IS IT? IS SOMEONE THERE?
GROAWRR
LUSTFUL EYES WATCHED IN SILENCE.
HURRIEDLY, FRANTICALLY, YARA DRESSED.
YEEEACH

IN HER HASTE TO ESCAPE THE HIDEOUS CREATURE, YARA RAN DIRECTLY INTO ANOTHER.

ROWLF, WITH THE SITUATION ALMOST UNDER CONTROL, TURNS TO FACE THE SECOND THREAT.

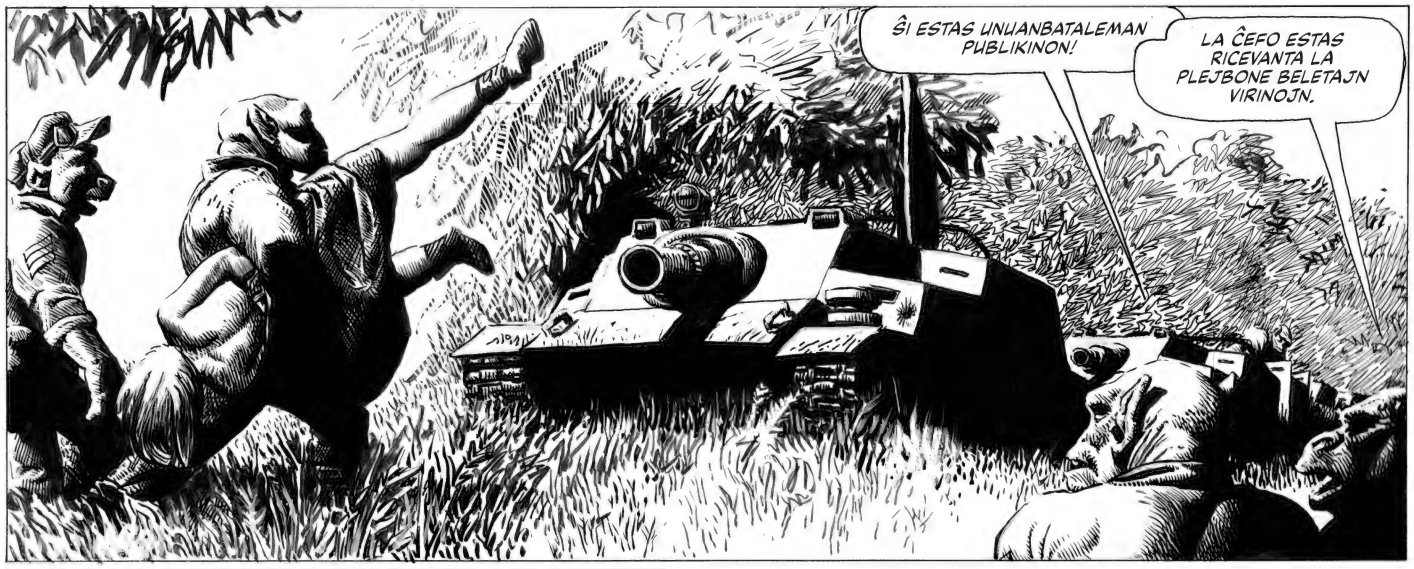
SOMEHOW SENSING THAT HE COULDN'T FIGHT THE STRANGE WEAPONS, ROWLF OBEYED YARA'S COMMAND AND RAN TO FETCH RAYMON.

BUT ALAS, THE DEMON ABDUCTOR DIDN'T WAIT FOR HELP TO ARRIVE.

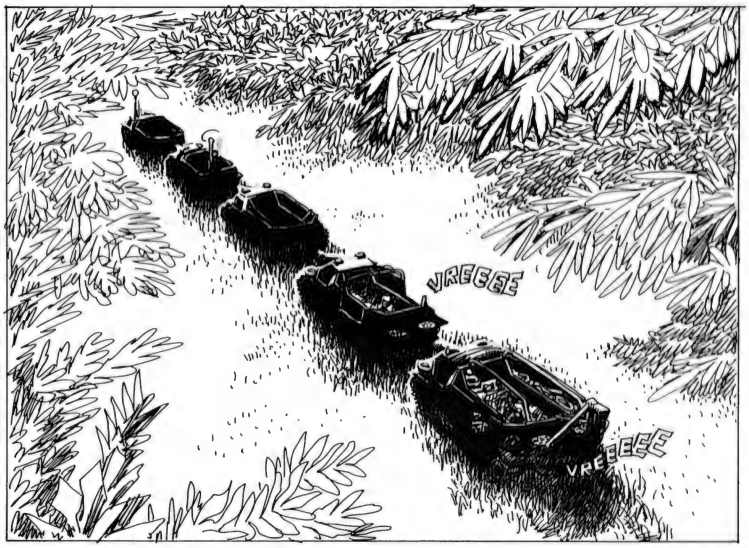
THE FOREST SOUNDS WERE HUSHED--ONLY WHIMPERING AND RUSTLING LEAVES WERE HEARD.

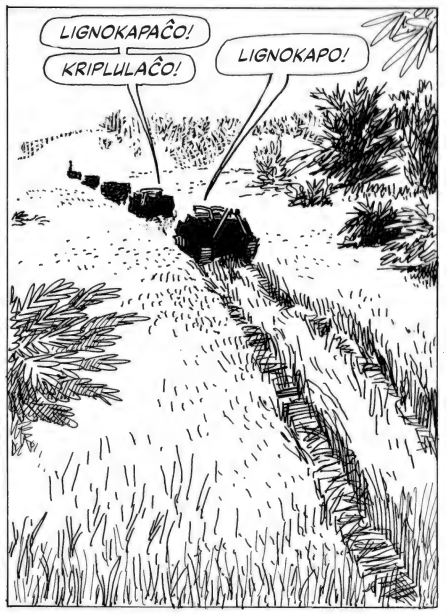
DESPITE THE BEAST'S OVERPOWERING STRENGTH, YARA SPIRITEDLY FOUGHT TO ESCAPE.

YARA HAD NEVER SEEN THE LIKES OF SUCH MACHINES AS THESE IN HER LIFE. SHE COULDN'T IMAGINE THEIR PURPOSE, NOR AT THIS MOMENT DID SHE CARE.



THE POWER PLANTS OF THE WEIRD VEHICLES CAME TO LIFE WITH BARELY A WHISPER; A MISLEADING SOUND CONSIDERING THEIR AWESOME POTENTIAL.



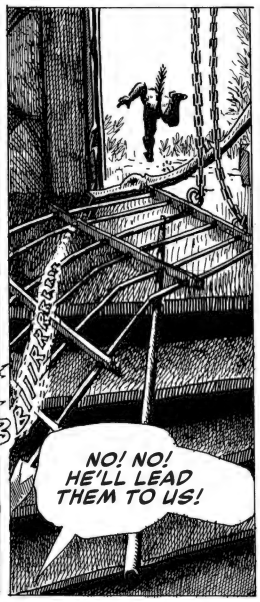


MEANWHILE, ROWLF HAD RETURNED TO SORTRUM'S HOUSE.
OH GOD, HE'S BACK!
ROWLF, STOP THAT BARKING!
BARK
BARK
BARK
SHUT UP, DAMN IT...! UH, HEY! WHERE IS MAYARA?
IF HE SMASHES ONE MORE THING, I'LL KILL HIM!
BARK
BARK
BARK
WHAT IS THAT STUFF ON HIS FUR?
BLOOD! THE GIRL'S BLOOD!
GOOD LORD! :GASP: WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH YARA, YOU BEAST?
BARK
WUF
GRRRRRRRR
IT MUST HAVE BEEN HIS WOLF'S HERITAGE! THE SAVAGE MONSTER TURNED ON YARA AND MURDERED HER! WHERE IS SHE?
JUST LOOK AT THE SNARLING FIEND!
GRRRRRRRR
FINALLY ROWLF BECAME AWARE THAT THE HUMANS COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HIM. HE TURNED, HOPING TO SAVE YARA HIMSELF.
DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!
SLAM
HOW WILL WE EVER FIND YARA'S REMAINS? HE CAN'T TELL US! OH, IF ONLY HE COULD TALK, THEN WE COULD TORTURE IT OUT OF HIM!
YES, OF COURSE! ...IF HE COULD TALK, WE COULD FORCE THE INFORMATION FROM HIM.
AND...ONLY A MAN CAN TALK!
THE COLUMN OF DEMON TANKS CAME TO THE CREST OF A HILL OVERLOOKING THE CASTLE OF CANISLAND.
HALTU!
RUMBLE

SERĴENTO...!
ĈU ESTAS LA LOKON?
JES! MI ESTAS REVENA NIAN BAZON. VI HAVAS LA KOMANDON... PERMESU NENIUN JE VIVI!
THE SERGEANT REMOUNTED HIS VEHICLE AND SIGNALED TO THE PLATOON.
IRU!
THE CHIEF WAITED AND WATCHED THE COLUMN ADVANCE TOWARD THE CASTLE.
RRUMBLLLLE
RRRRUMBLLLLE
RRRRUMBLLLLE
RRRRUMBL
APPROACHING THE CASTLE, THE SERGEANT SIGNALED AGAIN.
YOU MEAN YOU CAN ACTUALLY TURN HIM INTO A MAN?...AND HE WILL BE ABLE TO TALK?
SO YOU DOUBT THE POWERS OF SORTRUM THE SORCERER? WATCH, YOU DISBELIEVER!
WHAT IS THAT NOISE?
IT'S COMING FROM OUTSIDE! IT SOUNDS AS IF THE GROUND IS SHAKING!
GOOD LORD!
GORATH-SUM-KUM NEDA-LITLAT... CANIS-ROWLF-MOBILER-WHAT?
SORTRUM! COME HERE! LOOK AT THOSE WEIRD THINGS. WHAT IN THE WORLD? THEY ARE APPROACHING CANIS CASTLE!
SORTRUM! LOOK OUT THE WINDOW!
ER, WHAT'S THAT?
MOBILUS...ER, DAMN IT! MOBILUS ROWLF...NO! IT'S...SHUT UP, MAN! YOU'LL RUIN THE SPELL! ROWLF CANIS MOBILI...INTO HOMO SAPIENS? ER MOBILUS CANIS SAPIENS...?
YOU FOOL! YOU CAUSED ME TO MISCAST THE SPELL!

ROWLF HAD CHANGED...INTO A MAN? NO. THE SORCERER'S BLUNDER CREATED A THING WITHOUT PRECEDENCE. COULD THIS CREATURE SURVIVE IN THIS UNIVERSE? COULD THIS WORLD COPE WITH THIS MONSTER? ROWLF AWOKE AS IF FROM...
...A LONG, LONG DREAM. A BEWILDERING AWARENESS CAME OVER HIM. A NUMBER OF CONFUSING THOUGHTS APPEARED AND DISAPPEARED IN AN INSTANT.
ROWLF, SAY SOMETHING! WHERE IS YARA?...SPEAK!
GOD, WHAT HAVE I DONE?
MORE IMPORTANT, CAN IT TALK?
BARK
BARK
DAMN! STILL A DUMB, STUPID BEAST!
NEVER MIND THAT! LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENING OVER AT THE CASTLE!
WHO GOES THERE? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
GRRRRRR
RRRRRRRRRR
SQUEEK
KA
BLAM

ROWLF REMEMBERED HIS MISSION... YARA WAS IN DANGER. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, HE **THOUGHT** OVER THE SITUATION...FIRST, HE MUST ESCAPE FROM THESE STUPID HUMANS...


BRUUURRRR

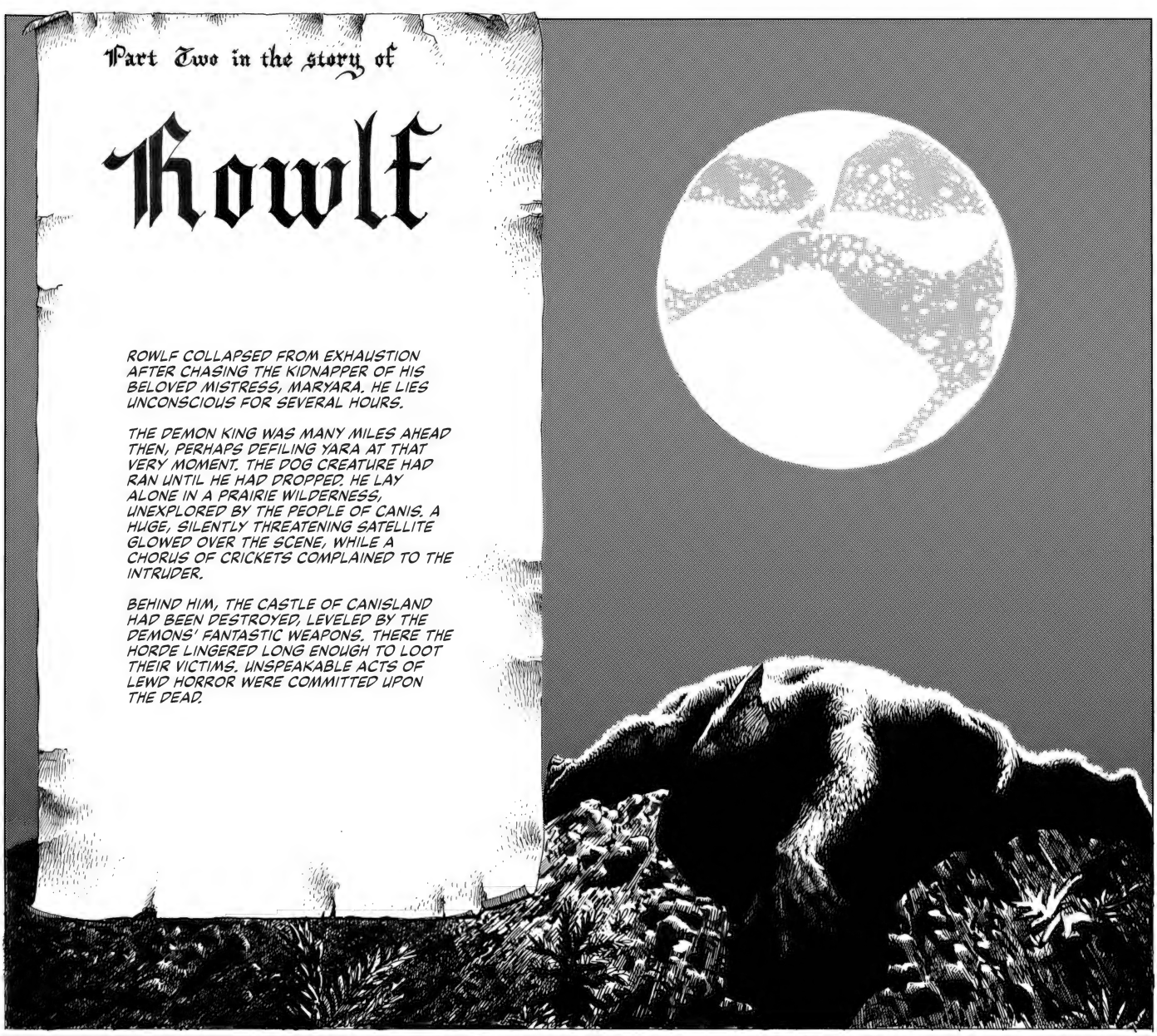
Part Two in the story of

Rowlf

ROWLF COLLAPSED FROM EXHAUSTION AFTER CHASING THE KIDNAPPER OF HIS BELOVED MISTRESS, MARYARA. HE LIES UNCONSCIOUS FOR SEVERAL HOURS.

THE DEMON KING WAS MANY MILES AHEAD THEN, PERHAPS DEFILING YARA AT THAT VERY MOMENT. THE DOG CREATURE HAD RAN UNTIL HE HAD DROPPED. HE LAY ALONE IN A PRAIRIE WILDERNESS, UNEXPLORED BY THE PEOPLE OF CANIS. A HUGE, SILENTLY THREATENING SATELLITE GLOWED OVER THE SCENE, WHILE A CHORUS OF CRICKETS COMPLAINED TO THE INTRUDER.

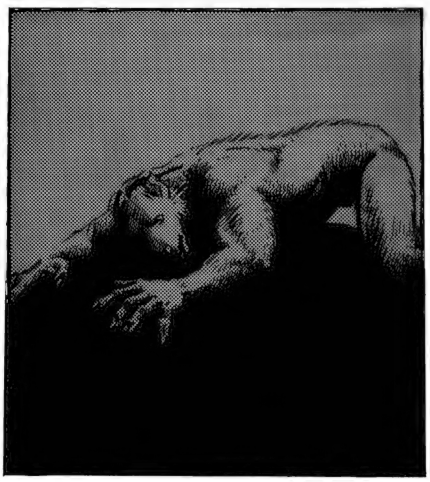
BEHIND HIM, THE CASTLE OF CANISLAND HAD BEEN DESTROYED, LEVELED BY THE DEMONS' FANTASTIC WEAPONS. THERE THE HORDE LINGERED LONG ENOUGH TO LOOT THEIR VICTIMS. UNSPEAKABLE ACTS OF LEWD HORROR WERE COMMITTED UPON THE DEAD.



PLAGUED BY INCOMPREHENSIBLE NIGHTMARES, ROWLF WHINED FITFULLY.

SLOWLY HE SENSED HIS SURROUNDINGS. HIS MIND THROBBED PAINFULLY WITH THE SURGE OF UNACCUSTOMED THOUGHTS.

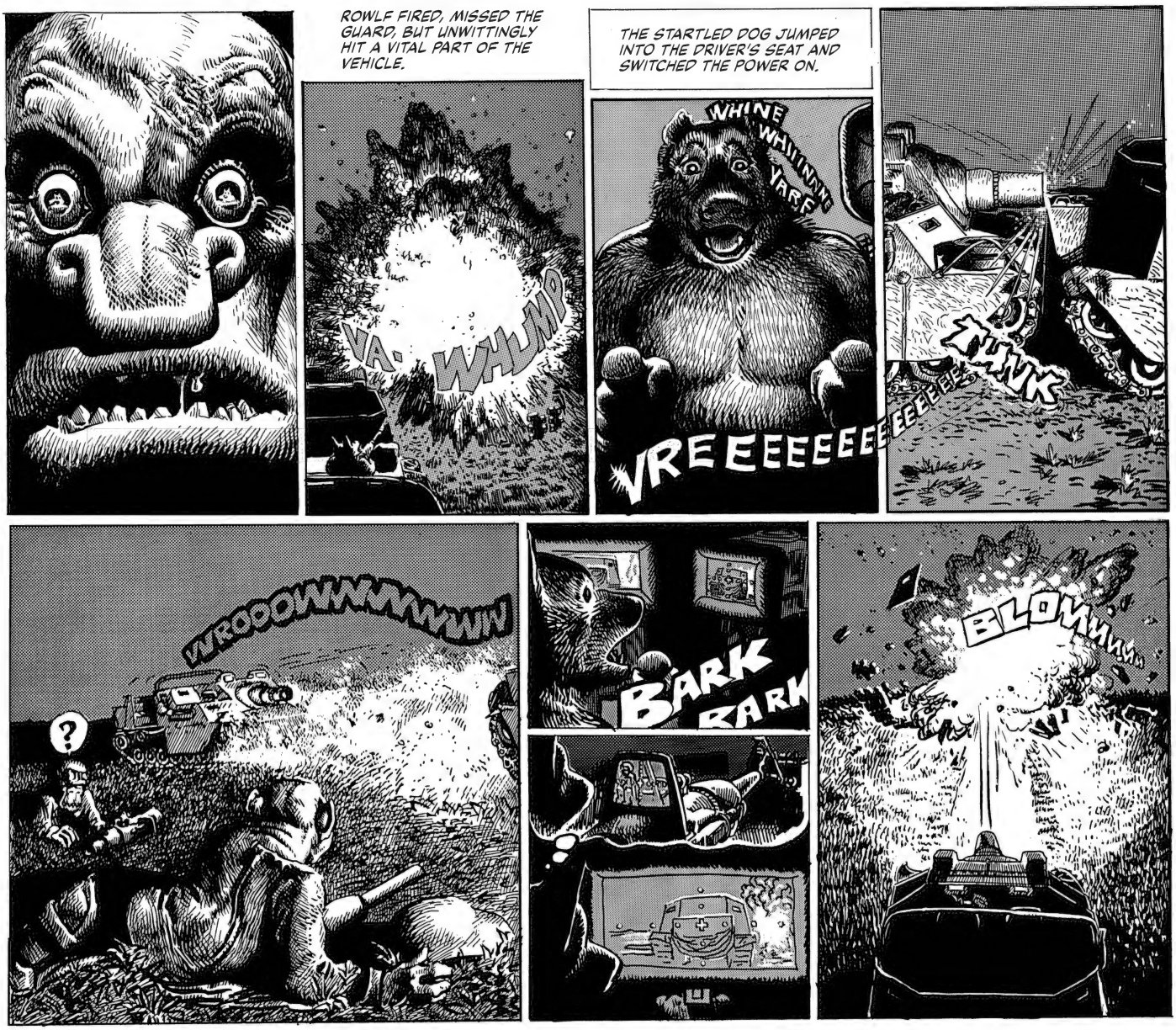
A FAINT DISTANT RUMBLING CAME TO HIM, FELT RATHER THAN HEARD, THROUGH THE GROUND.



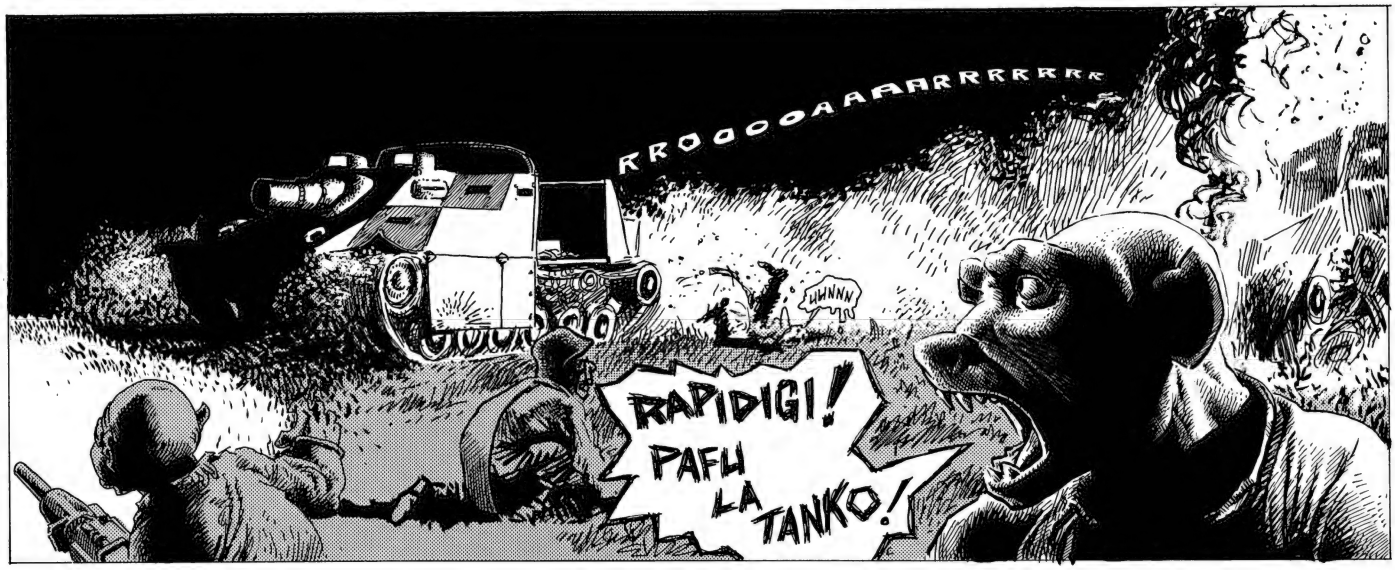
AFTER A FEW MINUTES, TINY LIGHTS APPEARED FROM THE DIRECTION OF CANISLAND.
ROWLF COULD SEE THAT THEY WERE THE DEMONS' VEHICLES...
...AND THAT THEY WOULD PASS NEAR HIM.
.....WWRRRRRRRRROOAARR
RUMBLE RUMBLE
ROWLF STUDIED THE DRIVER AND THE VEHICLE'S OPERATION...HE HAD A PLAN.
THE LEADER SIGNALED. THE COLUMN CLOSED UP AND STOPPED.
VI DORMANTAPLUMBA KAPAĈO!
TUNK

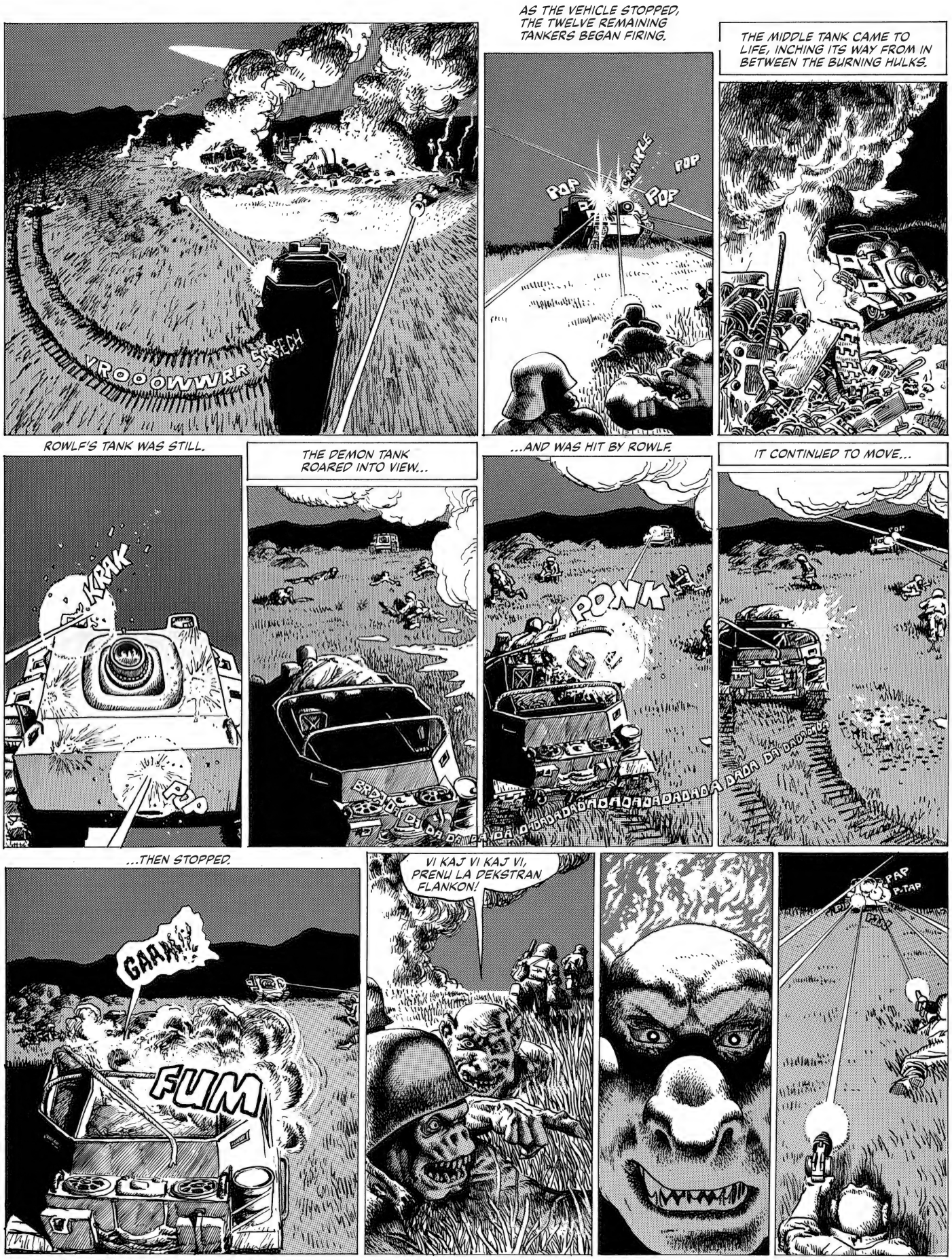
VI MORTI!
SILENTAĈO...! FORMADO...! ĈI TIE!
ROWLF DROPPED TO THE GROUND AND CRAWLED UNDER THE TANK.
PRENI VIA ILOJ ĜIS MIA VETURILO. UNUA TANKGLITILA KONTROLO ESTA FROSTA!
UUUUUU...
AS THE DEMON PLATOON DRIFTED INTO A LOOSE FORMATION, THE MAINTENANCE CREW RESTARTED THEIR VEHICLE. ROWLF SCURRIED TO THE COVER OF THE NEXT TANK IN LINE.
SCREECH KLAKLAKLA KLAKITY
RAPIDIGI! FORMU VICOJ! ...VIJ ESTAS PLI TEDA OL SNALA KRAPO!
BRRRKIKIKIK-IK
ATENTU!
CU VIJ ESTA BELA GRUPO? ...ĈU LA SINJORINOJ VOLUS MONTRI ILIA ARMILOJ? ...EKZAMENU--
EKZAMENU-
-ARMILOJ !
MALSAĜULAĈO!
DIO KONDAMNI!
TOK
FWD
PORKO!
KRAK
GISBANG
THUD
STOMP

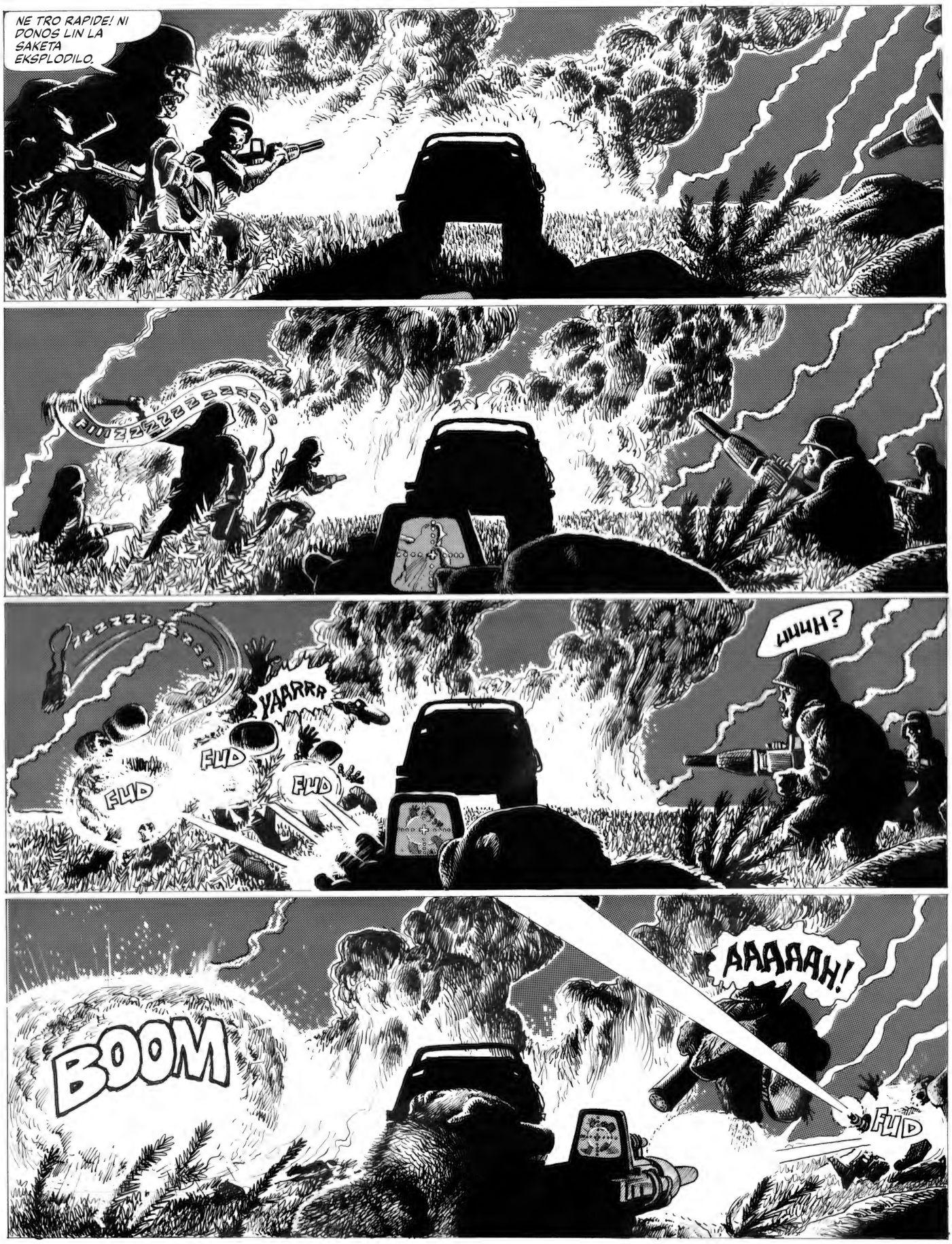
ALTHOUGH ASTOUNDED BY THE DEMONS' VIOLENCE, ROWLF WAS IMMEDIATELY INTERESTED IN THEIR HAND WEAPONS.
AFTER PROCEEDING WITH THE INSPECTION, THE SERGEANT IN CHARGE DROPPED THE DEAD TANKER'S WEAPON IN THE LAST TANK.
THE MECHANICS CONTINUED THEIR REPAIRS AS THE REST OF THE PLATOON WENT TO BED.
HE HE HE HE HE...
?
CRUNCH
MUNCH
GLUMP
BELCH
AFTER A WHILE THE MAINTENANCE CREW RETIRED...
...LEAVING A SOLITARY GUARD AWAKE.



THE SIMPLICITY OF THE TANK CONTROLS SAVED ROWLF'S LIFE. AS HE DROVE THROUGH THE GROGGY DEMONS, HE FINALLY FOUND THE HEADLIGHT SWITCH.

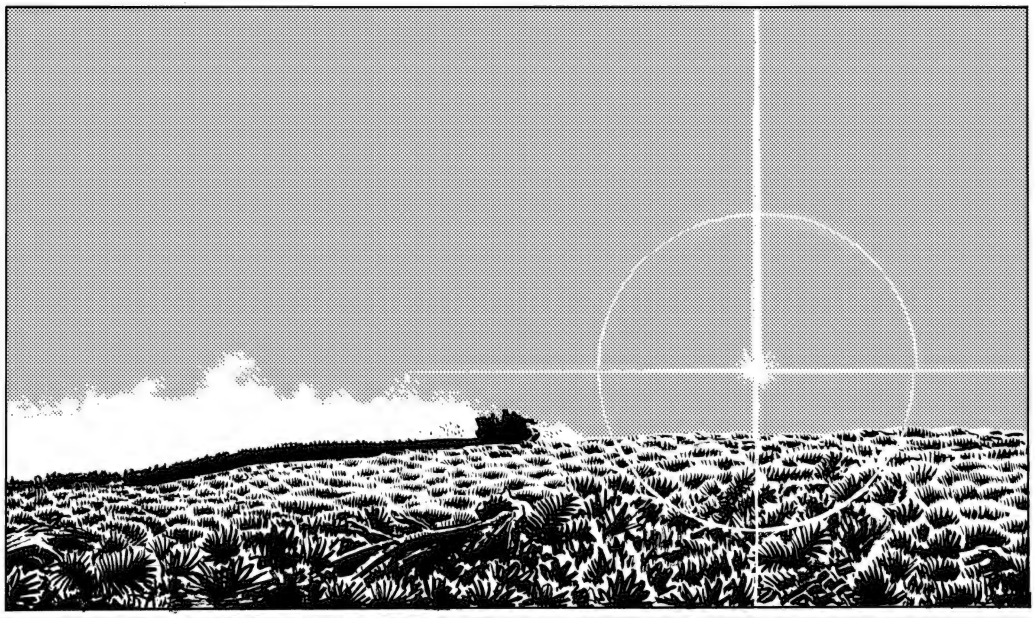


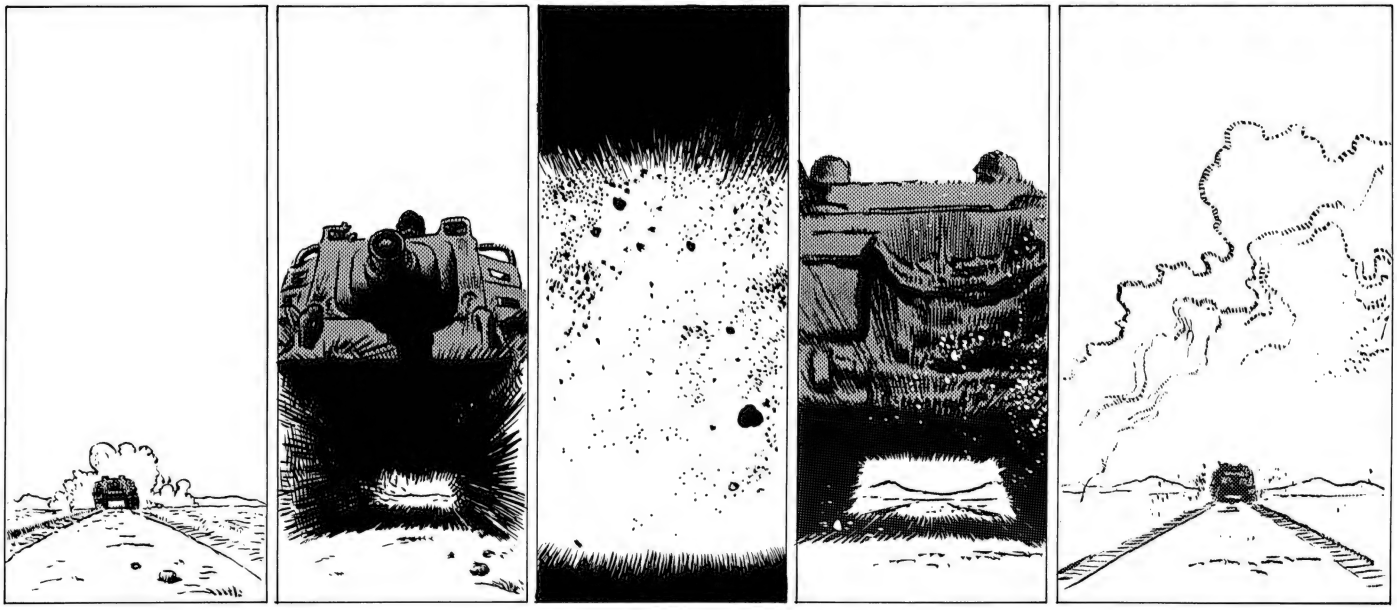

VROOOWWRR
SCREECH
AS THE VEHICLE STOPPED, THE TWELVE REMAINING TANKERS BEGAN FIRING.
POP
CRANKS
POP
POP
THE MIDDLE TANK CAME TO LIFE, INCHING ITS WAY FROM IN BETWEEN THE BURNING HULKS.
ROWLF'S TANK WAS STILL.
KRAK
PSP
THE DEMON TANK ROARED INTO VIEW...
...AND WAS HIT BY ROWLF.
PONK
IT CONTINUED TO MOVE...
...THEN STOPPED.
GAAA
FUM
VI KAJ VI KAJ VI, PRENU LA DEKSTRAN FLANKON!
PAP
P-TAP


NE TRO RAPIDE! NI DONOS LIN LA SAKETA EKSPLODILO.
FIUUZZZZZZZZZZZ
ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ
YAARRR
FUD
FUD
FUD
HHH?
BOOM
AAAAAH!
FUD

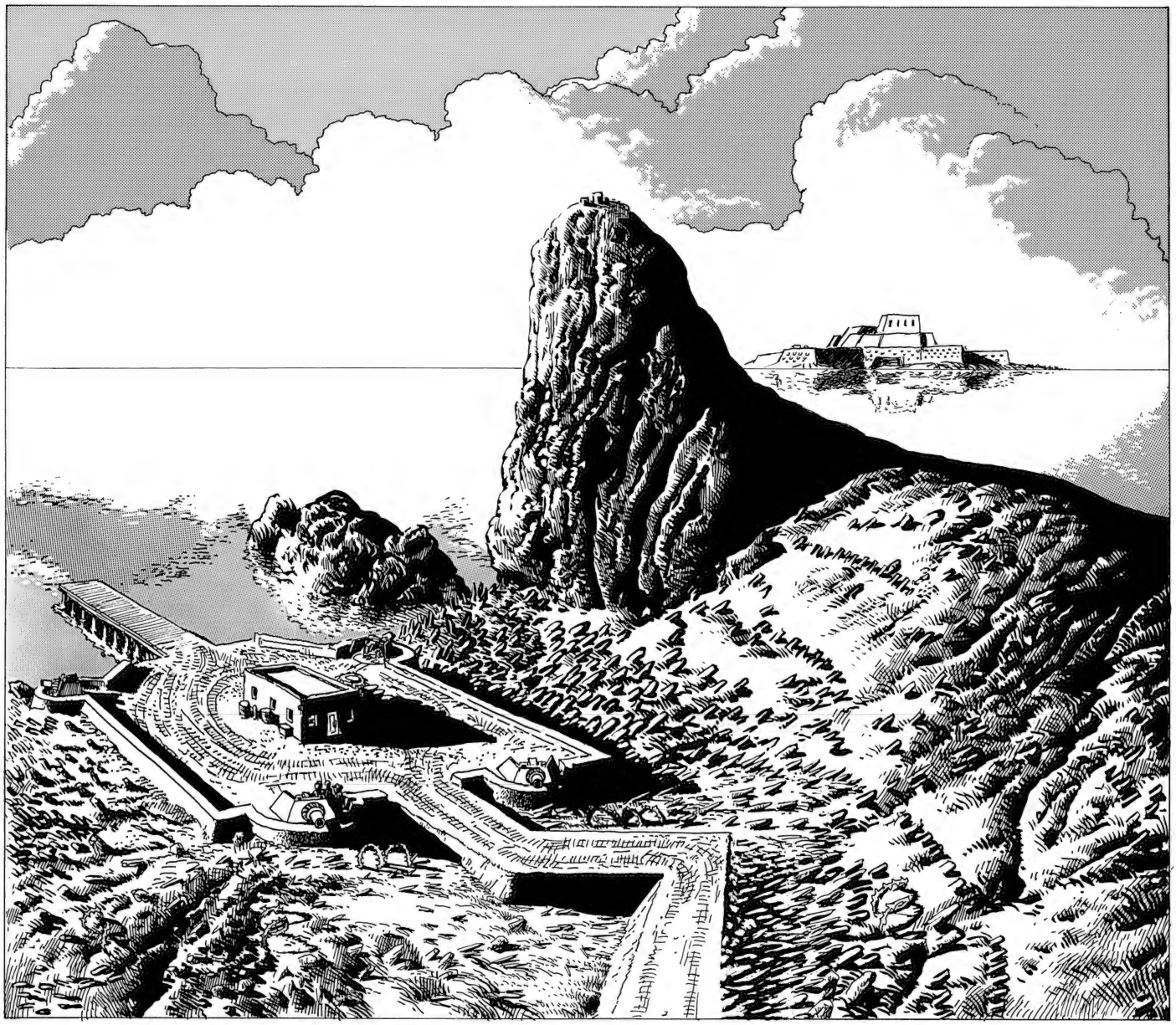
PAFADO!
IREGU LIM!
IRU!
MORTU! MANĜU!
HAI! HARRRR!
YIP! YIP!
TIE! PAFU! PAFIĜU!
PAP
FUP
POP
BLOVEĈU!
SSSS

AFTER A WHILE THE SKY BECAME LIGHTER. THE RAYS OF DAWN FOUND A LONE TANK RUMBLING, RATTLING, AND SQUEAKING TOWARD ITS BASE. ITS TIRED PASSENGERS QUIVERED AND BOUNCED AT THE MERCY OF THE LURCHING VEHICLE. THE MISSION HAD BECOME MORE DIFFICULT THAN EXPECTED...THE TROOPS DESERVED A REST. IT WOULD BE EVENING BEFORE THE TANK REACHED THE BASE'S OUTER GUARD POST. NOTHING TO DO ALL DAY BUT WIGGLE AND JIGGLE IN TIME WITH THE TRACKS' RUMBLE.





YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT TUMBLING A DEFENSELESS CASTLE IS HARD WORK...EVEN IF YOU DO HAVE MODERN, EFFICIENT WEAPONS. THEN WHEN YOU STOP FOR A NIGHT'S REST, SOME MALCONTENT STIRS UP **SO MUCH** TROUBLE THAT YOU DON'T GET A BIT OF SLEEP! BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU'RE BACK IN A TANK, ROARING ACROSS COUNTRY AT TOP SPEED. IT'S ENOUGH TO CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT RE-ENLISTING.



SINCE THE CHIEF WAS THROWING HIS USUAL COMING-HOME PARTY THIS EVENING, ONLY TWO GUN CREWS WERE ON DUTY AT THE LANDSIDE GUARD POST. ONE CREW WAS ON GUARD; THE OTHERS WERE ASLEEP IN THE BARRACKS.

HO, SERĜENTO! VI ALVENIS FRUE...KIE ESTAS LA ALIA TRIO? FORESTA SENPERMESA? HEH, HEH, HEH!
SERĜENTO? KIA ĜENO?
WHAMP
KRUD
KRASH
RUMBLE

CRASH
KRUMBLE
"SKREECH"
WHINE...
YARF!
ROWLF RUSHED ON, RUTHLESSLY PUSHED BY HIS LOVE FOR YARA. THE KIDNAPPED PRINCESS HAD BEEN ABDUCTED BY THE DEMON KING, GORGUM, IN THE FOREST OF CANISLAND. NOW SHE WAS THE UNWILLING GUEST OF HONOR AT THE KING'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN PARTY. THE BRAVE GIRL HAD NO HOPE OF RESCUE FROM THE HIDEOUS HORDE, BUT WAITED FOR THE CHANCE TO KILL HER CAPTOR...THEN HERSELF.
AN INHUMAN SCREECH ACCOMPANIED BY THE TORTURE OF ELECTRONIC SOUND MACHINES, POUNDS THE EARS OF THE ASSEMBLED DEMONS.
EYAHHHHHJJJ!!
ŝmaĉu mian ŝlimaĉa korpon! mi frapi vian kapon!
WU BUMP
RAUGH!
RAUGH
WU BUMP
WU BUMP
WU BUMP

YA UK
YA UK
YA UK
YA UK
HEH HEH HEH HEH HEH HEH
HONORU VENKO KAJ LA ĈEFO!
HAUGH!
RRIIIP
BLUMP

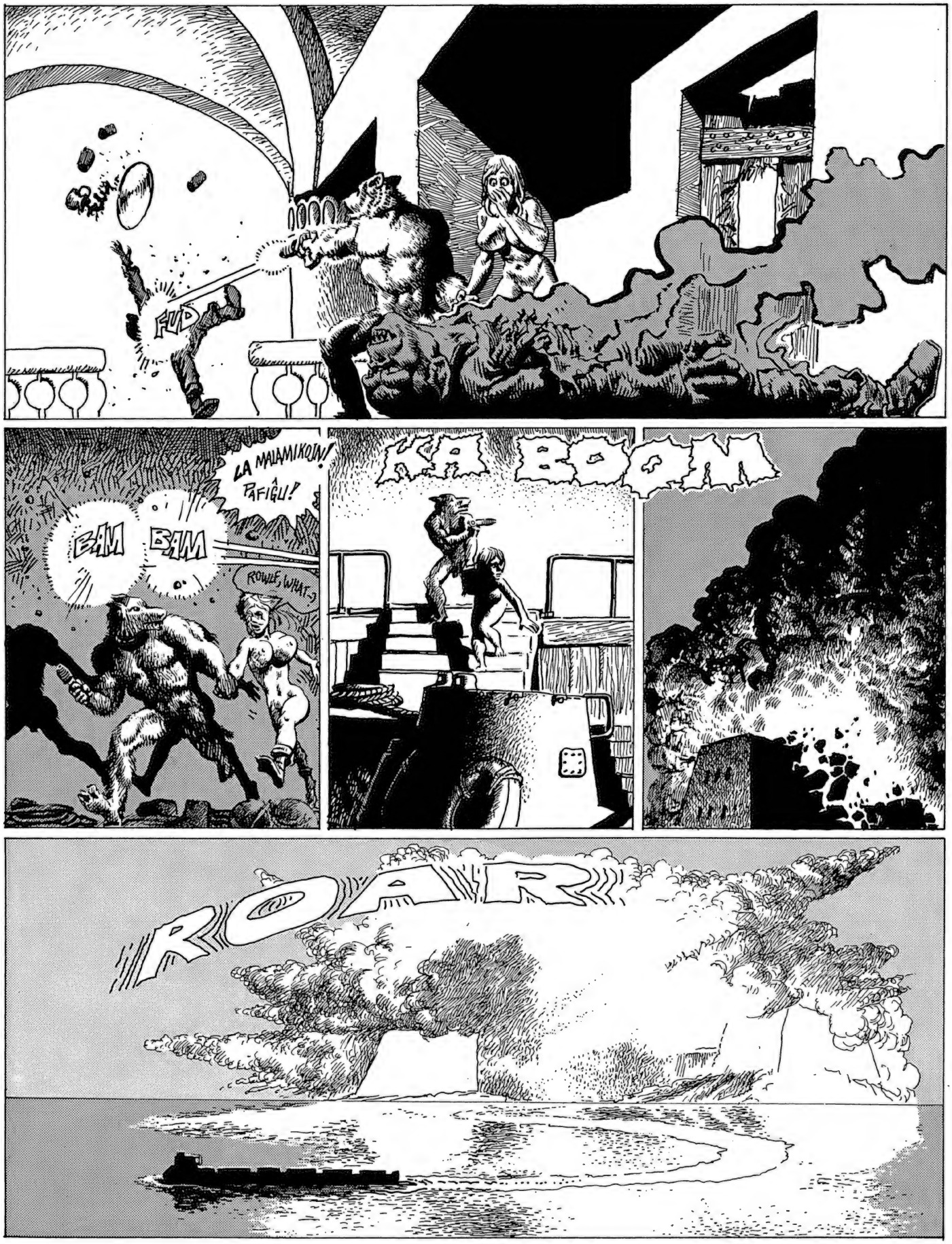
EEEEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUGH!
WUBUMP WUBUMP WUBUMP WUBUM
YAAAWWWWRRRRRRRRRRRR
UH?
ROWLF?
HEH, HEH, HEH, HEH, HEH, HEH...
KRAK
VI HUNDINAĈO!
SNIFF
SNIFF
GRRRRRRRR
ĈU?

RAWUCH
BOP
ROWLF?
CHOMP
BUMP
KRYEK
YAARRRRR
WHAM!
WHAM!
BONK

EEEEEEEE
FAUGH!
KRAK
WAP
GAUGH!
THUD
BUMP
SNAP

FIRING AT THE KING'S TANK...

...ROWLF INADVERTENTLY SET OFF THE STORED OIL SUPPLY.

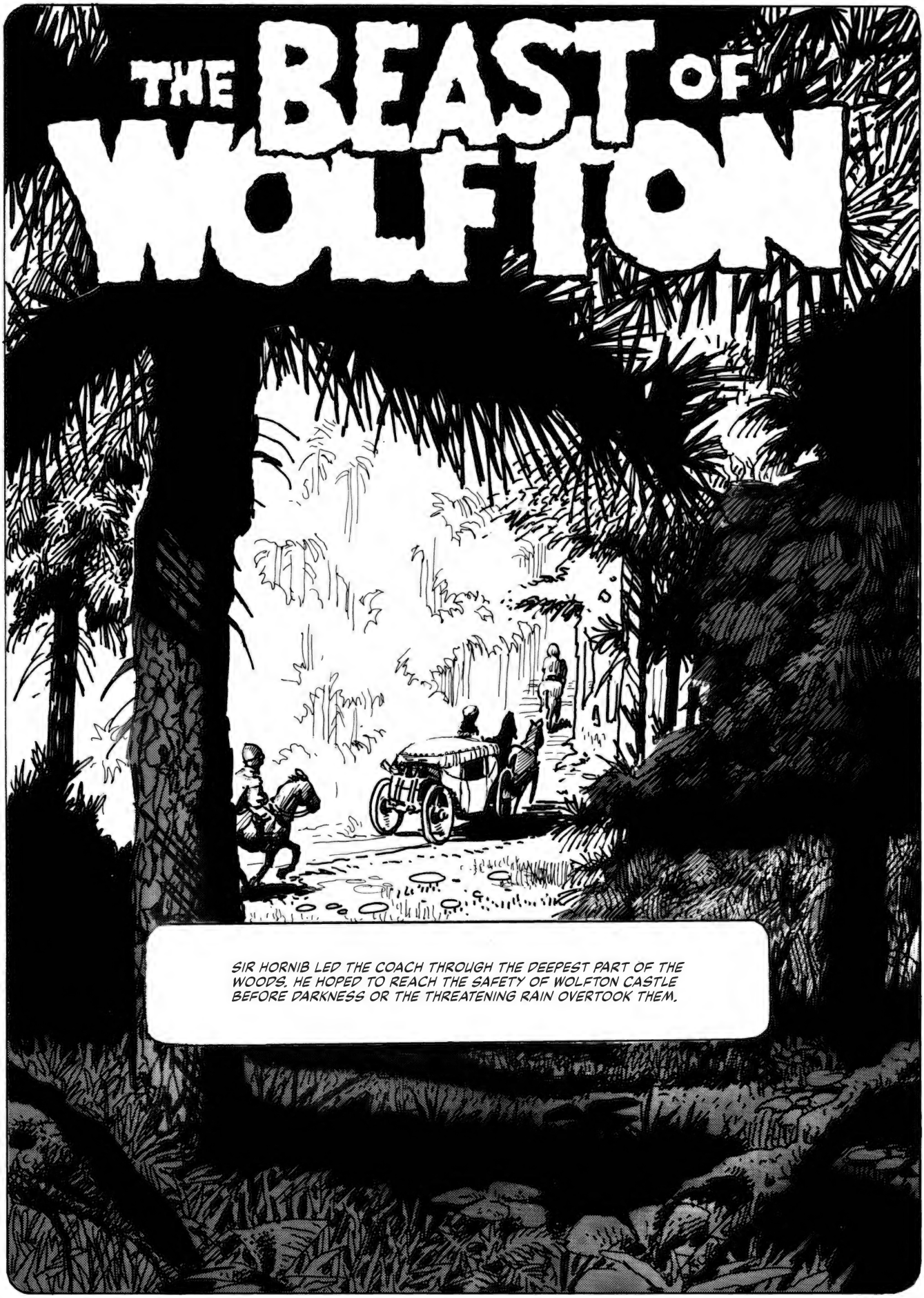

FUD
BAM BAM
LA MALAMIKOJN!
PAFIĜU!
ROWLF, WHAT-?
KA BOOM
ROAR!

ROWLF?
ROOOAR
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
SORTRUM, YOU'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!...MAKE A SPELL TO PROTECT US IN CASE THOSE DEMONS RETURN!
YOU LOW-LIFE COWARD!
I WOULD RAISE A GROUP OF MEN TO HUNT DOWN THE MONSTERS, BUT I MUST REMAIN HERE...IN CASE MARYARA RETURNS!
OH GOD! THEY'RE BACK!
YAH!
IT'S...IT'S COMING TO MY HOUSE!
A SPELL! ...SORTRUM MAKE A SPELL TO SAVE US!
IT'S THE GIRL...AND THE DOG!
GRROONRRRR
SKREEK

RAYMON! I'M BACK! ROWLF SAVED ME!

YARA! YOU'RE NAKED!! ...WHAT HAPPENED?
THE DEMON KING TOOK MY CLOTHES. THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO.
LOOK! THE DOG CREATURE!
HIS TRANSFORMATION SET THOSE DEVILS UPON US! HE MUST BE DESTROYED, AND QUICKLY!
GRRRRRR
ROWLF
FRAP
SEE, HE'S MAD! I'LL KILL HIM WITH MY KNIFE!
THAK
BOP
HUD
BAM
THE SPELL!! ...I'LL FIX 'EM!
YOG SOGUTH! NEDA-LATLIT...MOBLUS ROWLF CANIS SINEX TRANSMORGAL DOGUS DUMB...
RRROOAAR
...SUM HUM NU HOMO DOG...MORTFUTILE CHANGUM...ER...
MUCH LATER...
NO...NEDA...ER...IT'S ROWLF DUMB MORBULIS ET KANTI KUL...CRAP!
THE END

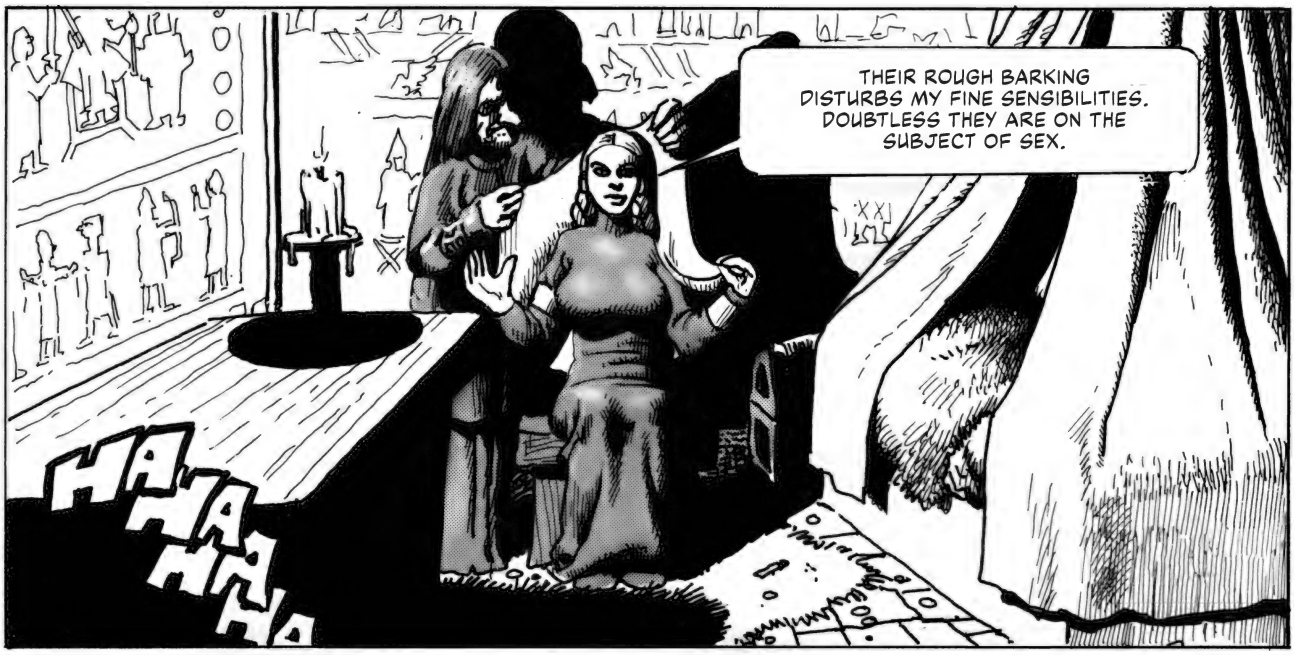
IN REMOTE ANCIENT LANDS NORTH OF CANISLAND THERE LAY A VAST FOREST CALLED DIREBAK. THE PEOPLE THAT LIVED THERE SHIVERED AND HID IN THE GLOOMY DARK. THEIR FEARS WERE FOUNDED IN MORE THAN GROUNDLESS MYTHS. HERE, THE UNKNOWN MENACE WAS SUBSTANTIAL AND HOVERED HORRIBLY JUST BEYOND PERCEPTION'S LIMITS.


THE BEAST OF WOLFTON
SIR HORNIB LED THE COACH THROUGH THE DEEPEST PART OF THE WOODS. HE HOPED TO REACH THE SAFETY OF WOLFTON CASTLE BEFORE DARKNESS OR THE THREATENING RAIN OVERTOOK THEM.

A PHANTOM DREAD CLUTCHED AT THE LONELY TRAVELERS. STRANGE RUMORS HAD SATURATED THE LAND. MANGLED BODIES HAD BEEN FOUND. COULD IT BE THE WORK OF A HUGE, BEWITCHED BEAR? A WOLF PACK? NONE WHO HAD SEEN THE TRUTH, LIVED TO TELL.
WHOOOA! WE'LL STOP HERE TO REST A MOMENT.
I HATE TRAVELING IN THESE FRIGHTENING WOODS.
FOR GOD'S SAKE, CHABITA, THE FEAR SICKNESS HAS INFECTED EVEN YOU.
AAAH!
OH, A LEAF.

SIR HORNIB, THE HORSES ARE AMAZINGLY NERVOUS.
I'M SURROUNDED BY BRAINLESS, WHIMPERING COWARDS.
LET'S BE OFF!
KLIPITY KLIPITY KLIPITY
CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH
MALGRIN CASTLE! WE MADE IT.
LET US IN! WE HAVE BUSINESS WITH YOUR LORD, MALGRIN.
OPEN THE GATE! THEY ARE PEOPLE.

YOU SAID PEOPLE; WHAT WERE YOU EXPECTING?
A DRAGON ROAMS THESE PARTS!
NAY! IT'S A MONSTROUS BEAR.
LORD MALGRIN WAS ROUSED TO GREET HIS GUESTS.
WHAT IS THIS? WHO WANTS TO SEE ME AT THIS HOUR?
IT IS I, SIR HORNIB OF MUROND AND MY LADY CHABITA. I AM YOUR COUSIN COME ANSWERING YOUR PLEA FOR HELP.
WHAT?...OH, YOU ARE THE ONE WHO THINKS HE CAN GET SOME MONEY FROM ME AND THE VILLAGERS BY CHASING THE DEMONS AWAY.
YOU'LL FAIL LIKE THE OTHERS. VERY WELL, WE SHALL SEE TOMORROW. NOW HAVE SOME WINE WITH ME.
TIRED FROM THE JOURNEY AND THE TENSION, LADY CHABITA BEGGED TO BE EXCUSED AND RETIRED TO A SLEEPING ROOM.

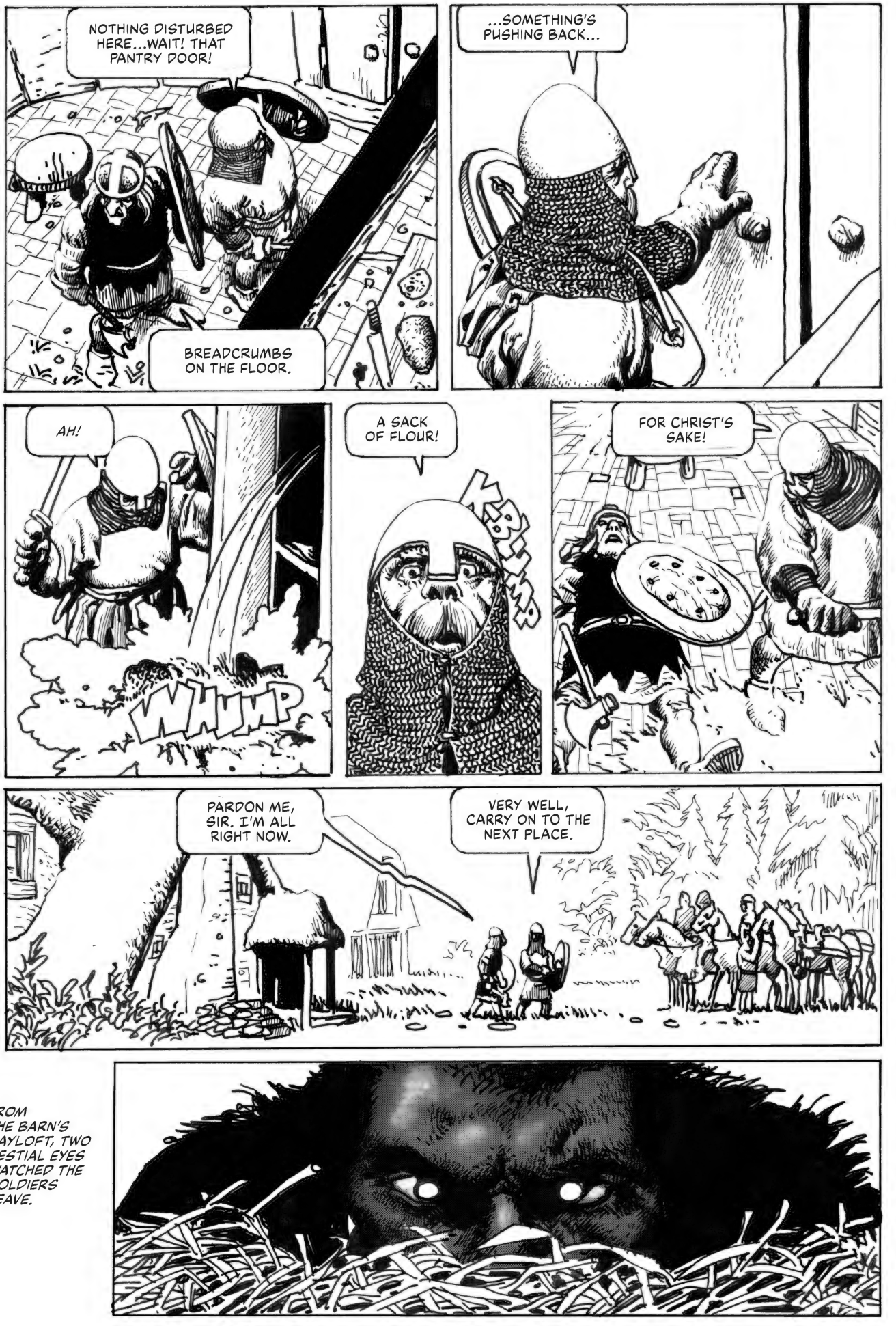


AFTER AN HOUR OR MORE.

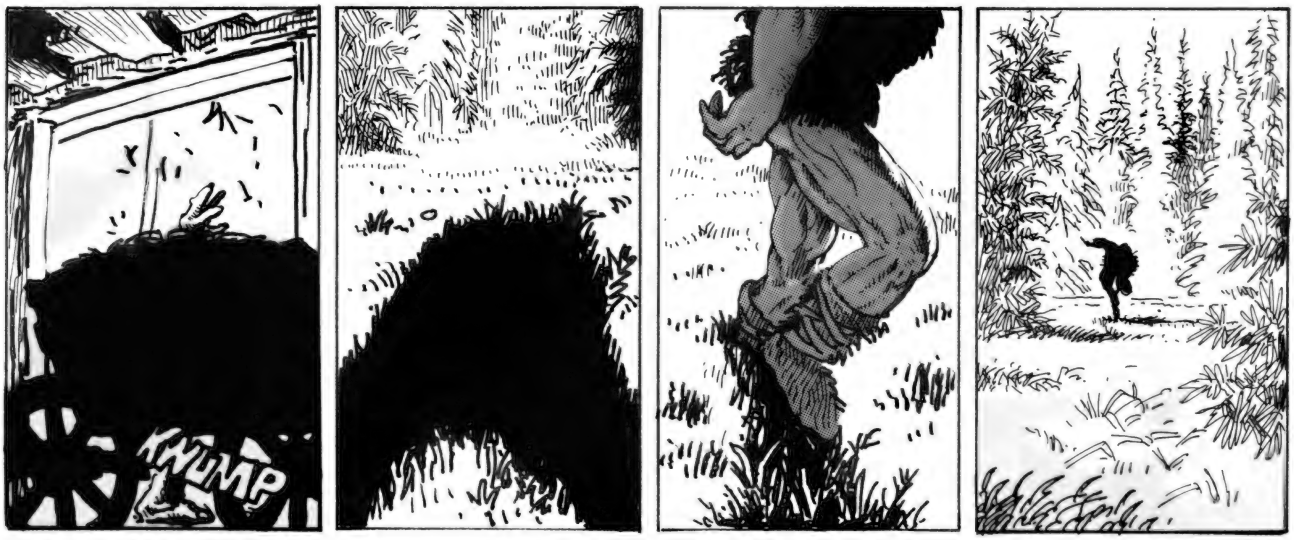
LIGHTNING FLASHED AND THUNDER ROARED AS HORNIB ASSAILED HIS RELUCTANT WIFE. HOWEVER, HER RESISTANCE FINALLY CAUSED HIM TO WITHDRAW.

THE WARY SOLDIERS WENT TO THE MOST RECENT SITE OF THE BEAST'S RAMPAGE. THEY REACHED THE ABANDONED INN BEFORE NOON.

WHAT INCREDIBLE STRENGTH IT MUST HAVE TO HAVE MANGLED THIS IRON ROD.
NOTHING HERE. LEAD ON TO THE NEXT PLACE.
DANCING SHADOWS SUGGESTED SINISTER PHANTOMS. THE HORSEMEN PENETRATED DEEPER INTO THE WILDS.
WHAT MANNER OF STRANGE BEAST... I CAN NOT IMAGINE.
A LORD'S COUNTRY HOUSE.
YES! HERE, LORD MALGRIN'S BROTHER WAS SLAIN. HE WAS DISMEMBERED.
WHO WAS KILLED AT THE INN?
WHY...IT WAS THE BARON'S NEPHEW AND HIS BULLI--ER, GUARDS.
SMASHED FURNITURE, BLOODSTAINS. THAT TABLE LOOKS AS THOUGH IT WAS THROWN.
WHAT'S IN HERE?
THAT'S THE KITCHEN.



FROM THE BARN'S HAYLOFT, TWO BESTIAL EYES WATCHED THE SOLDIERS LEAVE.

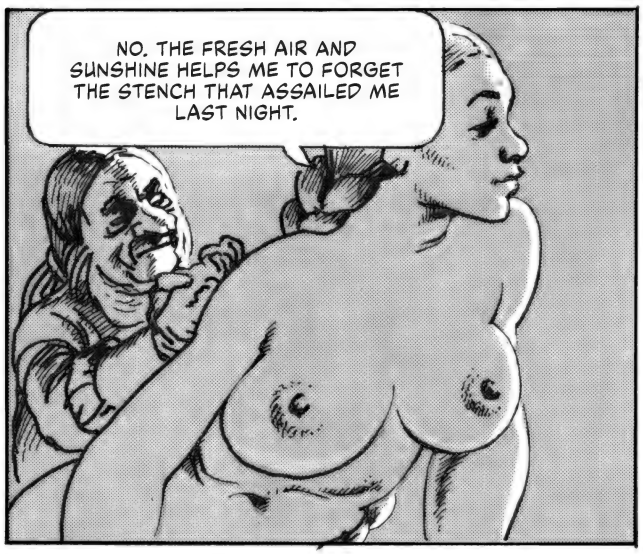


A DARK FORM SWUNG DOWN,

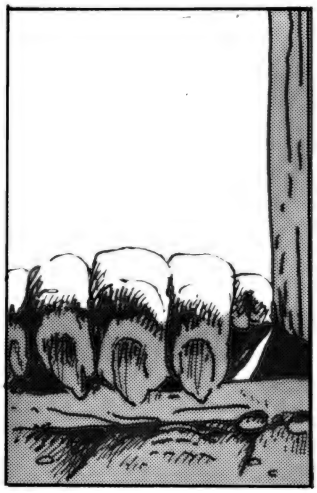
STOOD WATCHING,

TURNED TO WOLFTON,

AND LEFT.



A HAND GRASPED THE BALCONY'S EDGE.



TWO ANIMAL EYES WATCHED HUNGRILY.

HUGE ARMS PULLED SO THE CREATURE COULD SEE MORE.
THE SERVANT SAW, THEN CHABITA.
AAIEE
COME, MY LADY, WE'LL GET THE BARON.
HE'S GONE, MARTA.
IT WAS DUSK WHEN SIR HORNIB AND THE SOLDIERS RETURNED TO THE CASTLE. AS THE BARON'S FAMILY AND PRIVILEGED FRIENDS ATE, THE KNIGHT RELATED THE DAY'S ADVENTURE.
--THEN THE UNSEEN MONSTER SET A SPELL ON ONE OF THE MEN. I PURSUED IT BUT, LIKE A FORMLESS WRAITH, IT WAS GONE.
FEAR NOT, GENTLE PEOPLE; TOMORROW I SHALL RESUME THE QUEST. TOMORROW EVENING, WE SHALL GAZE UPON A BLOODY TROPHY--ITS HEAD!
TOO BAD, HORNIB. YOU'LL MISS THE FESTIVITIES. WE'RE GOING TO HANG A KRIND THIEF.
:GROWMMPH: WHAT'SA--:CHOMP, CHOMP, MUNCH:--KRIND?
THE KRIND WAS ONCE A POWERFUL PRIMITIVE TRIBE THAT SWARMED THESE HILLS IN YEARS GONE BY. THE SURVIVING MEMBERS NUMBER ABOUT A DOZEN.
RELATED TO THE PICTS?
PARDON ME, LORD BARON, A "PEEPING TOM" WAS AT MY ROOM TODAY AND I'M AFRAID HE'LL RETURN.

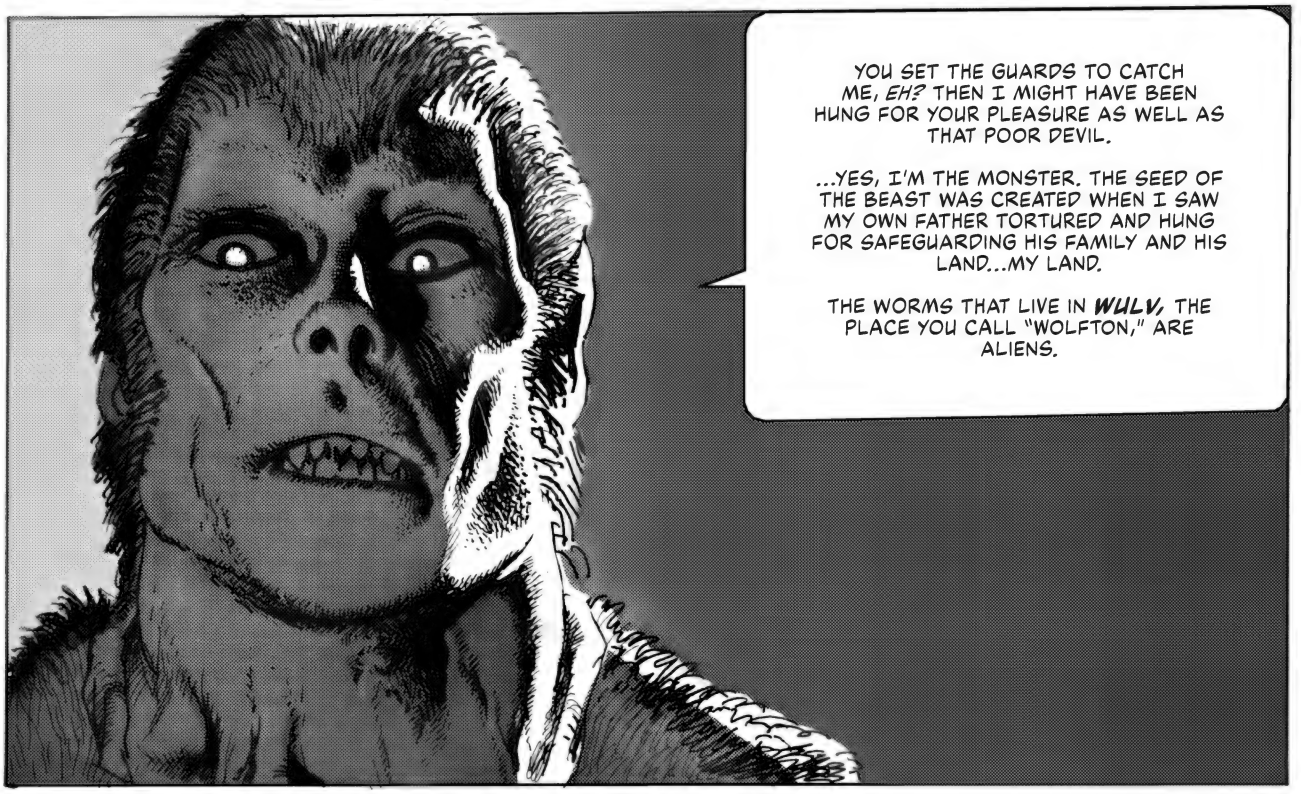
WHY...THAT'S DISGRACEFUL! NONE OF MY MEN WOULD--I'LL PLACE A GUARD OR TWO IN THE GARDEN BELOW YOUR BALCONY. PERHAPS WE'LL HAVE A DOUBLE HANGING.
THANK YOU, MY LORD BARON.
GOODY! NO COMMON BUMPKIN CAN GAWK AT MY BODY AND LIVE.
HE'LL PAY THE SUPREME PRICE FOR THE VIEW.
LADY CHABITA'S THOUGHTS RETURNED AGAIN AND AGAIN TO THE PROSPECT OF THE IMPENDING PARTY, AND WISHED SINCERELY THAT HORNIB WOULD SHARE THE THIEF'S FATE. SHE ENDURED HIS LUST AGAIN. HER FRUSTRATION AND HATRED GREW.
MY LOINS BURN WITH DESIRE!
YOU GODDAMNED SLAVERING MAGGOT!
LET ME BE! OH GOD!
:WHIMPER:
WHEN IS THE HANGING?
THE COOK SAID BEFORE NOON.

SSK
GSSK
YEAH!
YEA!
DID YOU SEE HIS GRUESOME FACE? ALL BUG-EYED AND SPITTING!
THE HANGING SPECTACLE WAS A RELIEF FROM THE DAY'S BOREDOM. THE KRIND HERMIT HAD STOLEN ONE OF THE BARON'S SWINE AND BUTCHERED IT. HIS GUILT WAS PROVED ON RATHER CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE, BUT IT WAS SUFFICIENT.
HE, HE, HE!
HAW, HAW! WHEN HE SHIT HIS PANTS, I THOUGHT WE'D REALLY HAVE A MESS TO CLEAN UP. HAW, HAW, HAW!
MY LADY, LOOK!
IT'S THE PEEPER. THE GUARDS DON'T SEE HIM. HE LOOKS SO STRANGE.

ACK
GRRRR
ROOWRR
WHOMB
MARTA, DON'T FAINT ON ME NOW!
UUNH!
OOOH!

THE UNCONSCIOUS LADY CHABITA WAS CARRIED BACK INTO THE GARDEN, THROUGH A HIDDEN UNDERGROUND PASSAGE, AND INTO THE FOREST.

FINALLY REACHING THE ABANDONED COUNTRY HOUSE, THE CREATURE STOPPED AT THE BARN.

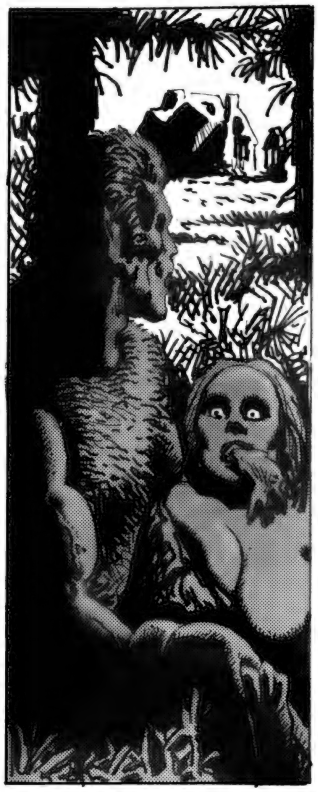

YOU SET THE GUARDS TO CATCH ME, *EH?* THEN I MIGHT HAVE BEEN HUNG FOR YOUR PLEASURE AS WELL AS THAT POOR DEVIL.
...YES, I'M THE MONSTER. THE SEED OF THE BEAST WAS CREATED WHEN I SAW MY OWN FATHER TORTURED AND HUNG FOR SAFEGUARDING HIS FAMILY AND HIS LAND...MY LAND.
THE WORMS THAT LIVE IN ***WULV,*** THE PLACE YOU CALL "WOLFTON," ARE ALIENS.

THE BEAST STARED AT CHABITA FOR LONG MOMENTS, THEN GRABBED HER.
AIIEEH
RIIP
DON'T BE AFRAID. I DON'T KILL WOMEN AND CHILDREN AS DOES THE FIEND IN WULV.
I'M SORRY TO DO THIS BUT YOU MIGHT RUN AWAY, AND IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW, THIS FOREST CAN BE DANGEROUS.
TELL ME, DO YOU LOVE YOUR HUSBAND?
WHAT? ...WHY YES, OF COURSE.
TOO BAD.
NOTHING! WE'LL GO BACK TO THE FOREST HOUSE. IT FOUND FOOD THERE. IT MIGHT RETURN.

SOON THE GROUP WAS CANTERING ALONG THE NARROW PATH THAT LED TO THE PLACE WHERE CHABITA LAY TIED IN THE HAYLOFT. FOR LONG STRETCHES THE ROAD WAS LINED WITH TREES AND HEAVY UNDERGROWTH THAT SQUEEZED THE WAY TORTUROUSLY.

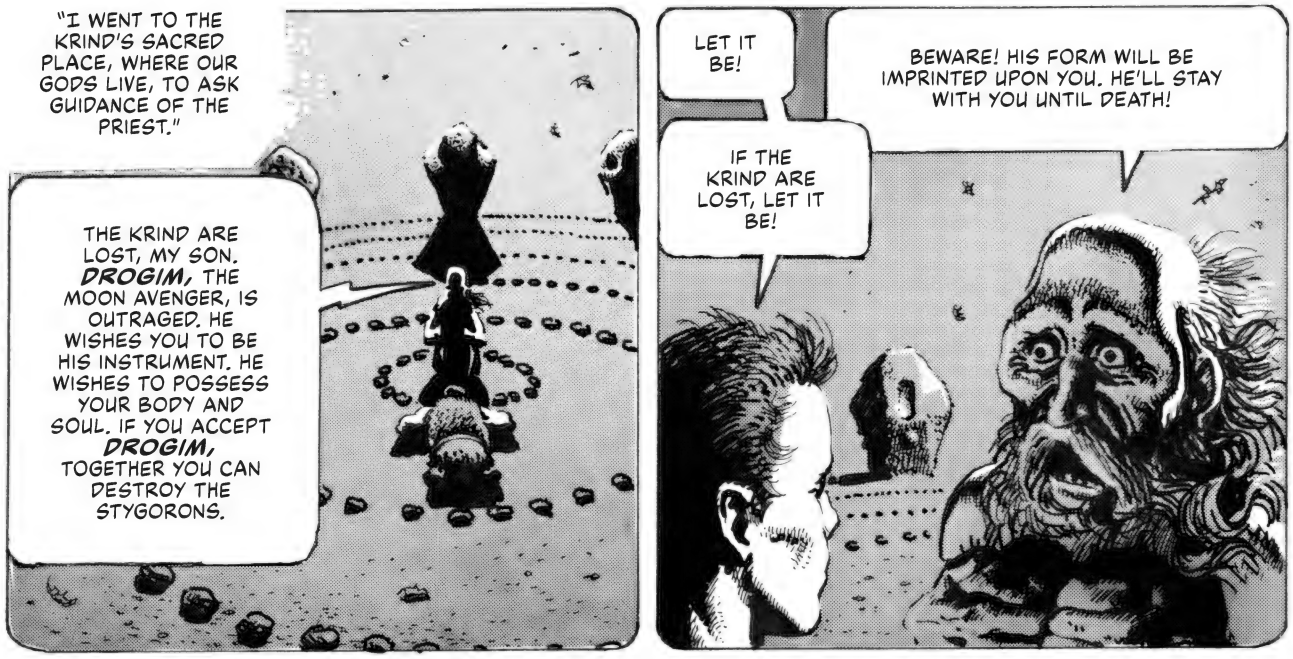
BUT, IN OTHER PLACES, THE ROAD WAS WIDE AND SMOOTH.

DAMNATION! IT MUST HAVE HAPPENED WHEN WE WERE GOING ALONG SINGLE FILE.
NO! YOU MEAN THE BEAST HAS TAKEN THEM?
YES. WE MUST STAY IN A CLOSE GROUP AND MOVE QUICKLY!

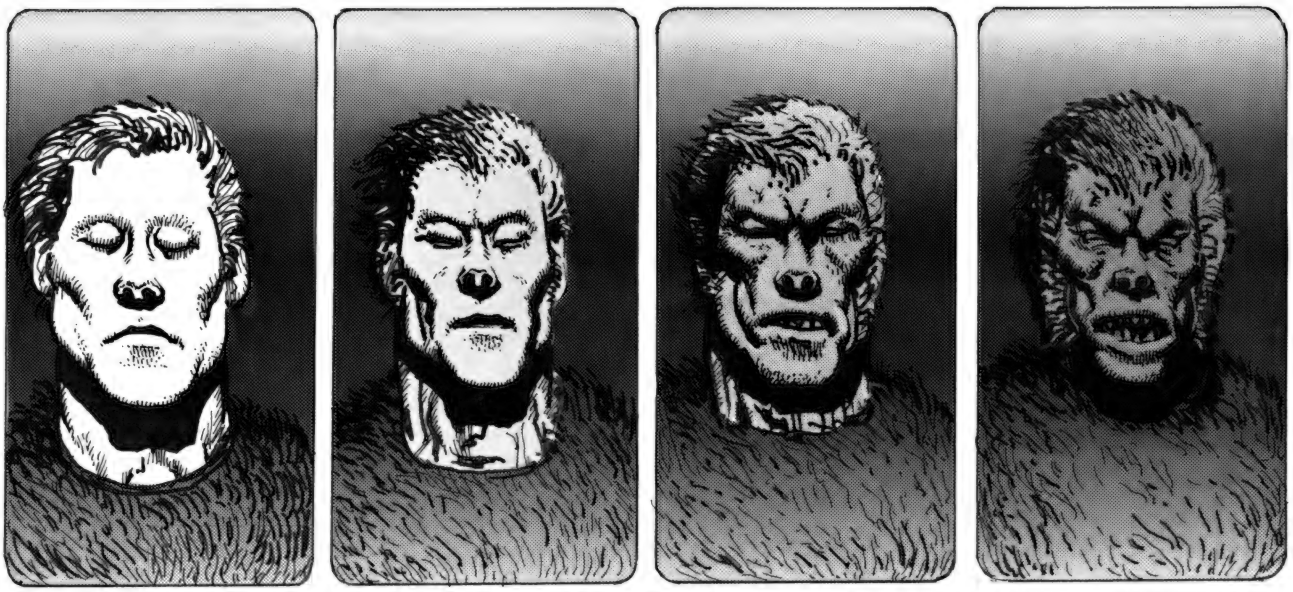


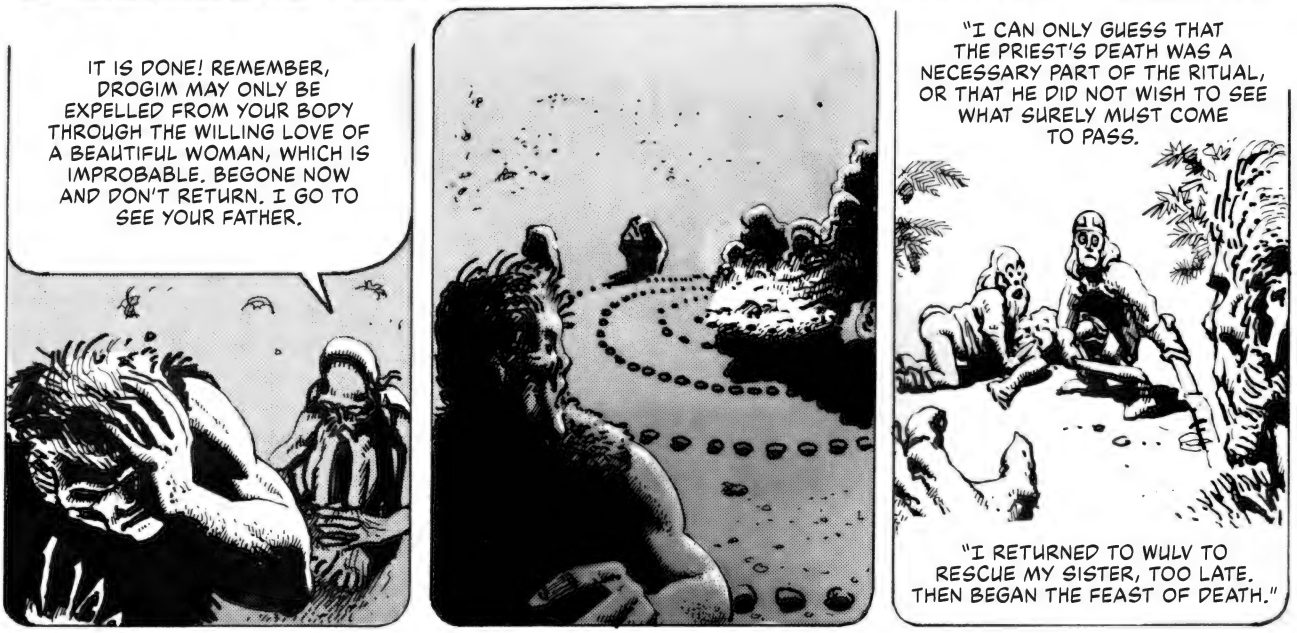
HE'S BEEN IN THERE LONG ENOUGH!
LOOK AT THE CHIMNEY. THE FIRE IS GOING.
I THINK I CAN HEAR HIM WALKING AROUND.
YEEAAAAAGH
THE MEN DREW THEIR SWORDS AND ENTERED, READY FOR BATTLE.
HERE HE IS. WHAT'S THE MATTER, ALBERT?
HIS NECK-- -CHOKE-
KLIPITY KLIPITY
THE HORSES!
WHOA! WHOA!
AFTER THE MEN RAN INTO THE WOODS, THE HOUSE WAS STILL.

HERE, EAT.
HE'S HUGE!
HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE YOU KILLED?
I...I DON'T KNOW. WHEN THE BLOODLUST COMES, MY MIND BECOMES CLOUDED. I DON'T LIKE TO KILL. THE DEAD HAUNT MY DREAMS. I SEE THEIR FACES TWISTED, BODIES BROKEN. THEY MOAN TO ME LIKE AN EERIE WIND IN THE TREES.
I SEE MY MOTHER, THIN AND WITHERED, DEAD OF STARVATION. MY FATHER WAS A KRIND CHIEF. HE TRIED TO COMPROMISE WITH THE STYGORONS AND WHEN THEY LAUGHED, HE FOUGHT THEM. WE ARE FEW. THEY TOOK HIM, DRUGGED HIM, HUNG HIM, AND LET HIM ROT.
MY SISTER AND I FLED. THE BARON'S MEN CAUGHT US. I SLEW ONE AND ESCAPED.


"I WENT TO THE KRIND'S SACRED PLACE, WHERE OUR GODS LIVE, TO ASK GUIDANCE OF THE PRIEST."
THE KRIND ARE LOST, MY SON. DROGIM, THE MOON AVENGER, IS OUTRAGED. HE WISHES YOU TO BE HIS INSTRUMENT. HE WISHES TO POSSESS YOUR BODY AND SOUL. IF YOU ACCEPT DROGIM, TOGETHER YOU CAN DESTROY THE STYGORONS.
LET IT BE!
IF THE KRIND ARE LOST, LET IT BE!
BEWARE! HIS FORM WILL BE IMPRINTED UPON YOU. HE'LL STAY WITH YOU UNTIL DEATH!

"THE PRIEST GAVE ME A POTION, SPOKE MANY STRANGE THINGS, AND A SPELL WAS CREATED."




IT IS DONE! REMEMBER, DROGIM MAY ONLY BE EXPELLED FROM YOUR BODY THROUGH THE WILLING LOVE OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, WHICH IS IMPROBABLE. BEGONE NOW AND DON'T RETURN. I GO TO SEE YOUR FATHER.
"I CAN ONLY GUESS THAT THE PRIEST'S DEATH WAS A NECESSARY PART OF THE RITUAL, OR THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO SEE WHAT SURELY MUST COME TO PASS.
"I RETURNED TO WULV TO RESCUE MY SISTER, TOO LATE. THEN BEGAN THE FEAST OF DEATH."

THAT FUNGOUS FOOL IN THE CASTLE IS THE ARCHENEMY. HE THINKS HE IS SAFE BEHIND THOSE THICK STYGORON WALLS. WULV HAS MANY ENTRANCES AND WOFLTON IS BUILT ON WULV.
NYAAAAA! HA, HA, HA!
PREPARE YOUR MEN! ALL OF THEM. IT IS TIME FOR EXTRAVAGANT ACTION. THE BEAST HAS TAKEN LADY CHABITA FROM THESE WALLS. TOMORROW, I SHALL LEAD YOU MYSELF! BEGONE!
'SA GODDAMNED SHAME! 'SHOULD'VE NEVER COME TO THIS FORSAKEN LAND.
THUD
CLUMSY OAF!

HESITATING A MOMENT, THE CREATURE WONDERED WHETHER TO KEEP THE RELIC.

IT TURNED AND THREW THE HEAD OUT THE WINDOW. SOON THE BEAST WAS TRAVELING ON THE ROAD BACK TO THE COUNTRY HOUSE. IT STOPPED AND LISTENED. THE SOUND OF MANY HOOFBEATS CAME TO HIM.

HYAAW! HYAAW!
SIR HORNIB SAW THE BARRIER IN TIME TO HALT. THE SQUIRE AND SOLDIER DIDN'T.
EH?
AUWG
CRASH
WHAT IN HELL?
KRAK
ARE YOU THE LADY'S HUSBAND?

SIR HORNIB LOST CONSCIOUSNESS FOR A FEW MOMENTS. HIS FACE WAS NUMB. HIS MOUTH WAS FULL OF BLOOD AND BROKEN TEETH. HE COULD ONLY MOVE HIS TONGUE AND SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH THE BONES OF HIS FACE. HE WAS ALONE. HE DIED.

CHABITA LOOKED AROUND THE HOUSE FOR A WEAPON. SHE FOUND THE SOLDIER'S AX AND CARRIED IT TO THE UPSTAIRS ROOM. IF THE BEAST RETURNED, SHE HAD A PLAN.

I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LEAVE. I DIDN'T KILL YOUR HUSBAND. I'LL TAKE YOU TO HIM IF YOU WISH.
DON'T TALK NOW. I GRIEVE FOR YOUR OWN LOSSES. I KNOW YOUR DESPERATION DROVE YOU TO VIOLENCE.

OUH! MMMM, SLOWLY, MY LOVE. -UNGH- DEEPER, AAAAHH!
RRAUGHAAH AH AH AH
AAH!
I FEEL A GREAT RELIEF.
DROGIN HAS LEFT ME.
IT IS GOOD!

SOMETHING MALIGNANT OVERCAME LADY CHABITA. A FOUL DREAD, A FEAR FROM THE PIT OF HER HIPS. FRANTICALLY, SHE DRESSED AND RAN INTO THE DARK, ABYSMAL FOREST.

SHE WAS FOUND A COUPLE DAYS LATER, ALIVE BUT UTTERLY INSANE. BECAUSE OF HER NOBLE HERITAGE, SHE WAS CARED FOR IN A CONVENT OF NUNS. THERE SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A VERY STRANGE CHILD.

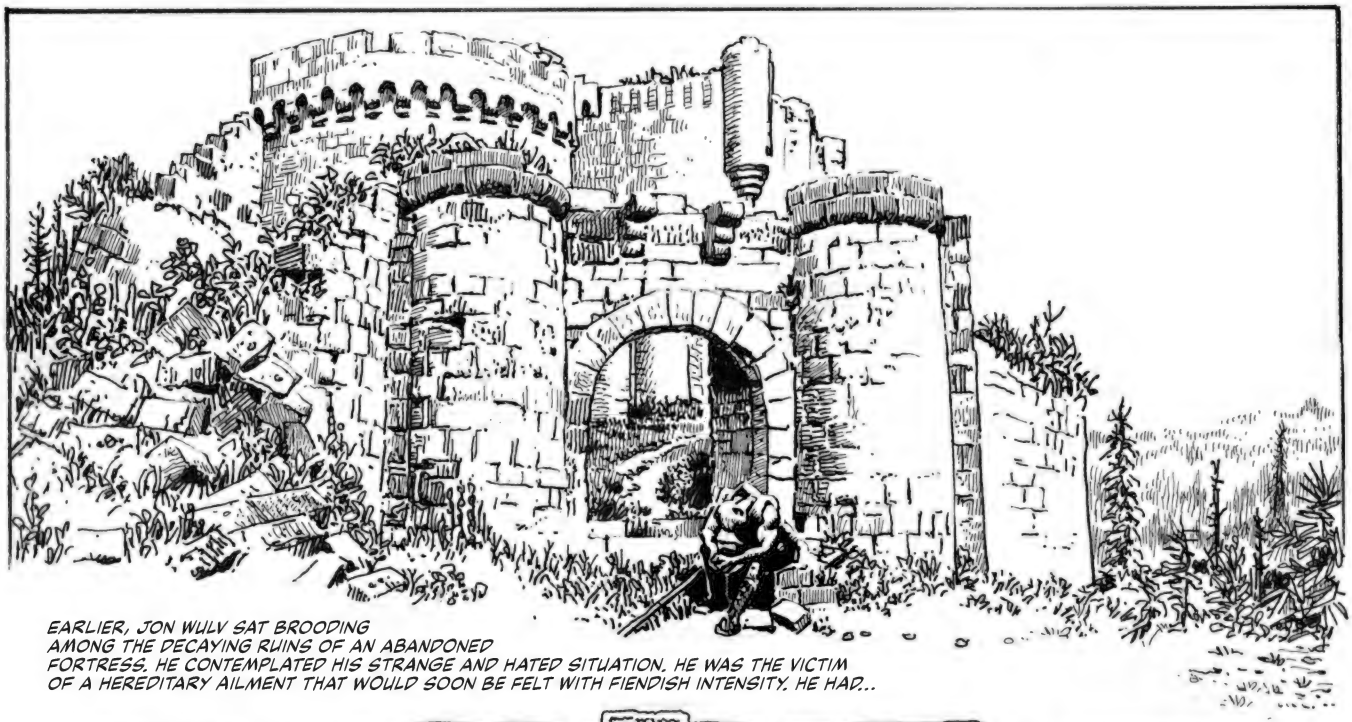
THE END

A DARK FIGURE RUNS HEADLONG THROUGH THE FOREST.

A HORRIBLE FEAR DRIVES HIM BEYOND THE LIMITS OF ENDURANCE.

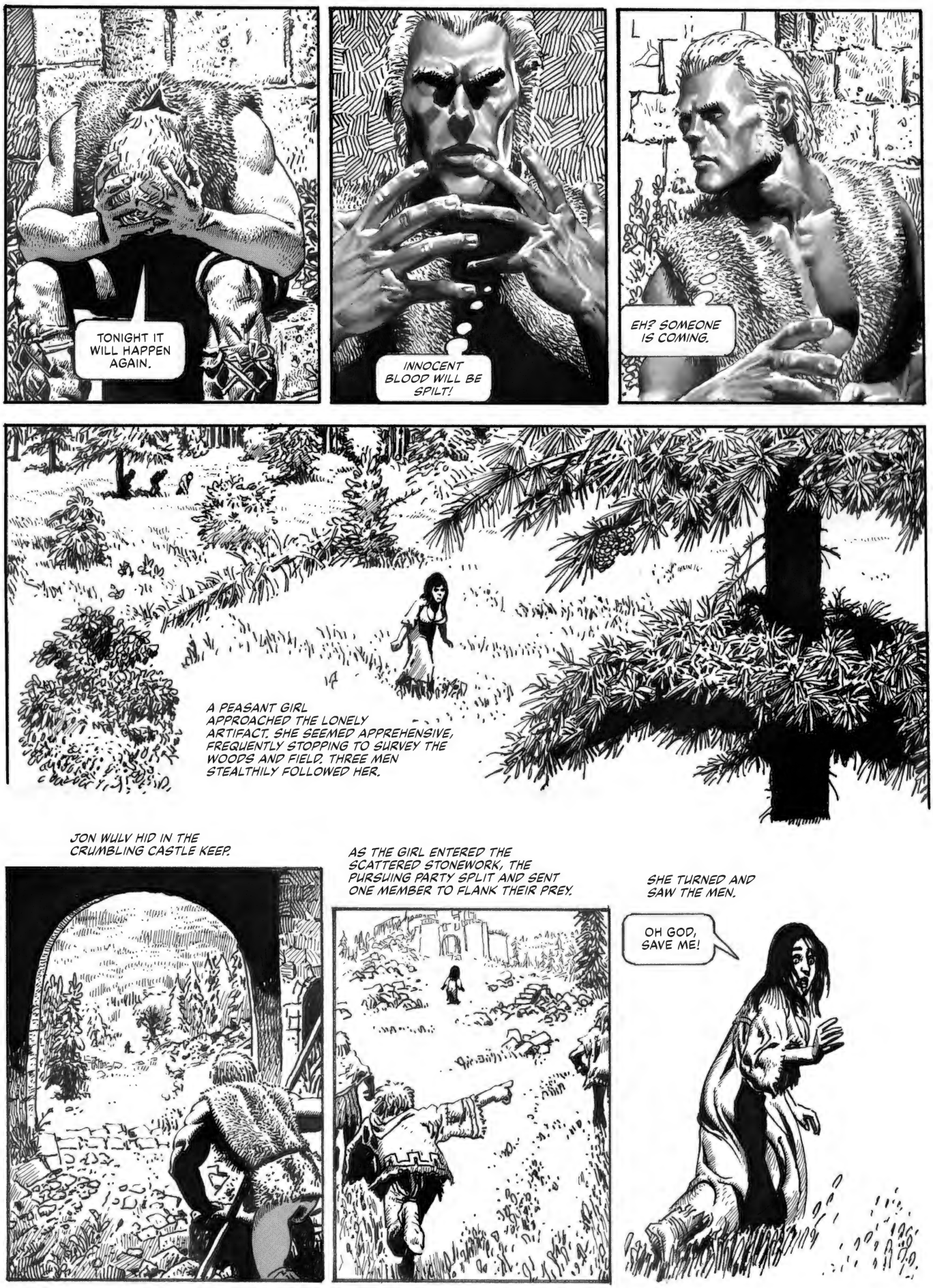
PANTING, GASPING, HE DOES NOT STOP.

PURSUED BY THE HIDEOUS FORCES OF HELL, HE STAGGERS ON.

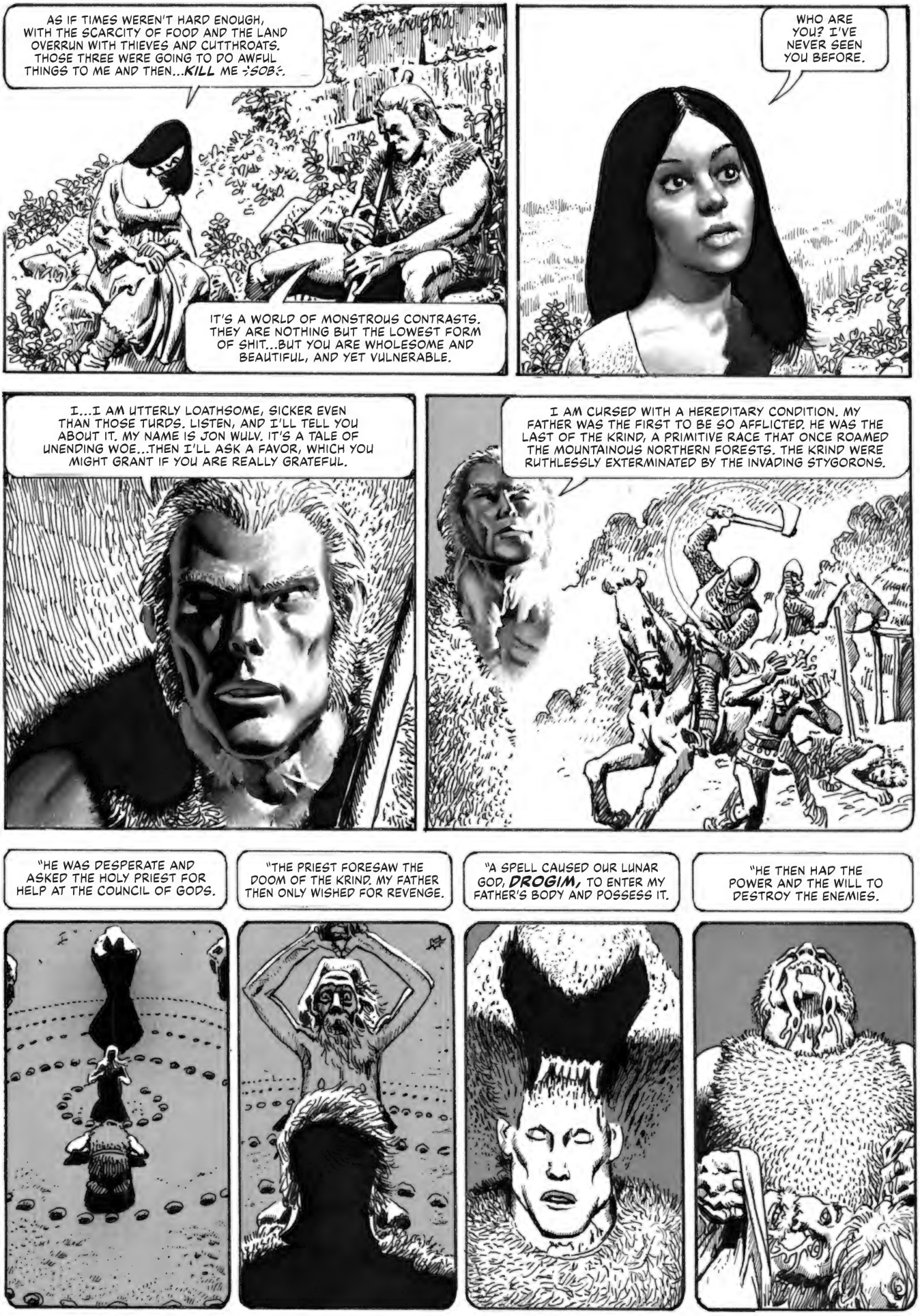


EARLIER, JON WULV SAT BROODING AMONG THE DECAYING RUINS OF AN ABANDONED FORTRESS. HE CONTEMPLATED HIS STRANGE AND HATED SITUATION. HE WAS THE VICTIM OF A HEREDITARY AILMENT THAT WOULD SOON BE FELT WITH FIENDISH INTENSITY. HE HAD..

THE SPIRIT OF THE BEAST

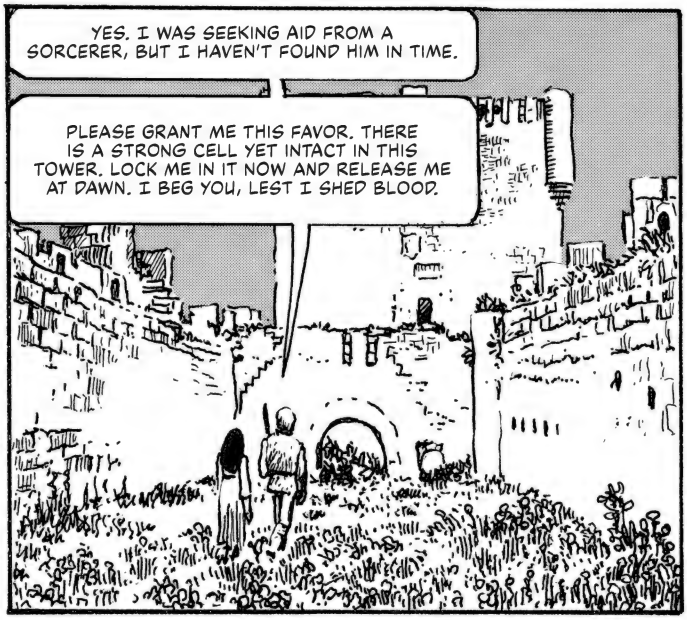

THE SINGULAR CONDITION MANIFESTED MANY SIDE EFFECTS, SOME OF WHICH WERE ACTUALLY BENEFICIAL.
TONIGHT IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN.
JON WULV HAD NEVER SUFFERED THE EFFECTS OF NORMAL DISEASES; HIS STRENGTH WAS INHUMAN.
INNOCENT BLOOD WILL BE SPILT!
HIS SENSES OF SIGHT, SMELL, AND HEARING WERE ACUTE.
EH? SOMEONE IS COMING.
A PEASANT GIRL APPROACHED THE LONELY ARTIFACT. SHE SEEMED APPREHENSIVE, FREQUENTLY STOPPING TO SURVEY THE WOODS AND FIELD. THREE MEN STEALTHILY FOLLOWED HER.
JON WULV HID IN THE CRUMBLING CASTLE KEEP.
AS THE GIRL ENTERED THE SCATTERED STONEWORK, THE PURSUING PARTY SPLIT AND SENT ONE MEMBER TO FLANK THEIR PREY.
SHE TURNED AND SAW THE MEN.
OH GOD, SAVE ME!

AAAIIEEH!
C'MON, JACK, I GOT 'ER.
HEH, HEH, HEH! HEY, STOP FIGHTING YOU BITCH, OR YOU'LL GO OUT HARD!
INTENT ON THEIR PLAY, THE THREE MEN DID NOT SEE JON WULV APPROACH.
WHAK!
OOF!
THOK
KRAK
BEGONE OR I'LL KICK YOUR GODDAMNED HEADS IN!
OH, THANK YOU. THEY WERE GOING TO KILL ME. I'M SURE OF IT.
NEVER MIND. I DIDN'T LIKE THEIR LOOKS, ANYWAY.


AS IF TIMES WEREN'T HARD ENOUGH, WITH THE SCARCITY OF FOOD AND THE LAND OVERRUN WITH THIEVES AND CUTTHROATS. THOSE THREE WERE GOING TO DO AWFUL THINGS TO ME AND THEN...KILL ME -SOB-.
IT'S A WORLD OF MONSTROUS CONTRASTS. THEY ARE NOTHING BUT THE LOWEST FORM OF SHIT...BUT YOU ARE WHOLESOME AND BEAUTIFUL, AND YET VULNERABLE.
WHO ARE YOU? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE.
I...I AM UTTERLY LOATHSOME, SICKER EVEN THAN THOSE TURDS. LISTEN, AND I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT. MY NAME IS JON WULV. IT'S A TALE OF UNENDING WOE...THEN I'LL ASK A FAVOR, WHICH YOU MIGHT GRANT IF YOU ARE REALLY GRATEFUL.
I AM CURSED WITH A HEREDITARY CONDITION. MY FATHER WAS THE FIRST TO BE SO AFFLICTED. HE WAS THE LAST OF THE KRIND, A PRIMITIVE RACE THAT ONCE ROAMED THE MOUNTAINOUS NORTHERN FORESTS. THE KRIND WERE RUTHLESSLY EXTERMINATED BY THE INVADING STYGORONS.
"HE WAS DESPERATE AND ASKED THE HOLY PRIEST FOR HELP AT THE COUNCIL OF GODS.
"THE PRIEST FORESAW THE DOOM OF THE KRIND. MY FATHER THEN ONLY WISHED FOR REVENGE.
"A SPELL CAUSED OUR LUNAR GOD, DROGIM, TO ENTER MY FATHER'S BODY AND POSSESS IT.
"HE THEN HAD THE POWER AND THE WILL TO DESTROY THE ENEMIES.

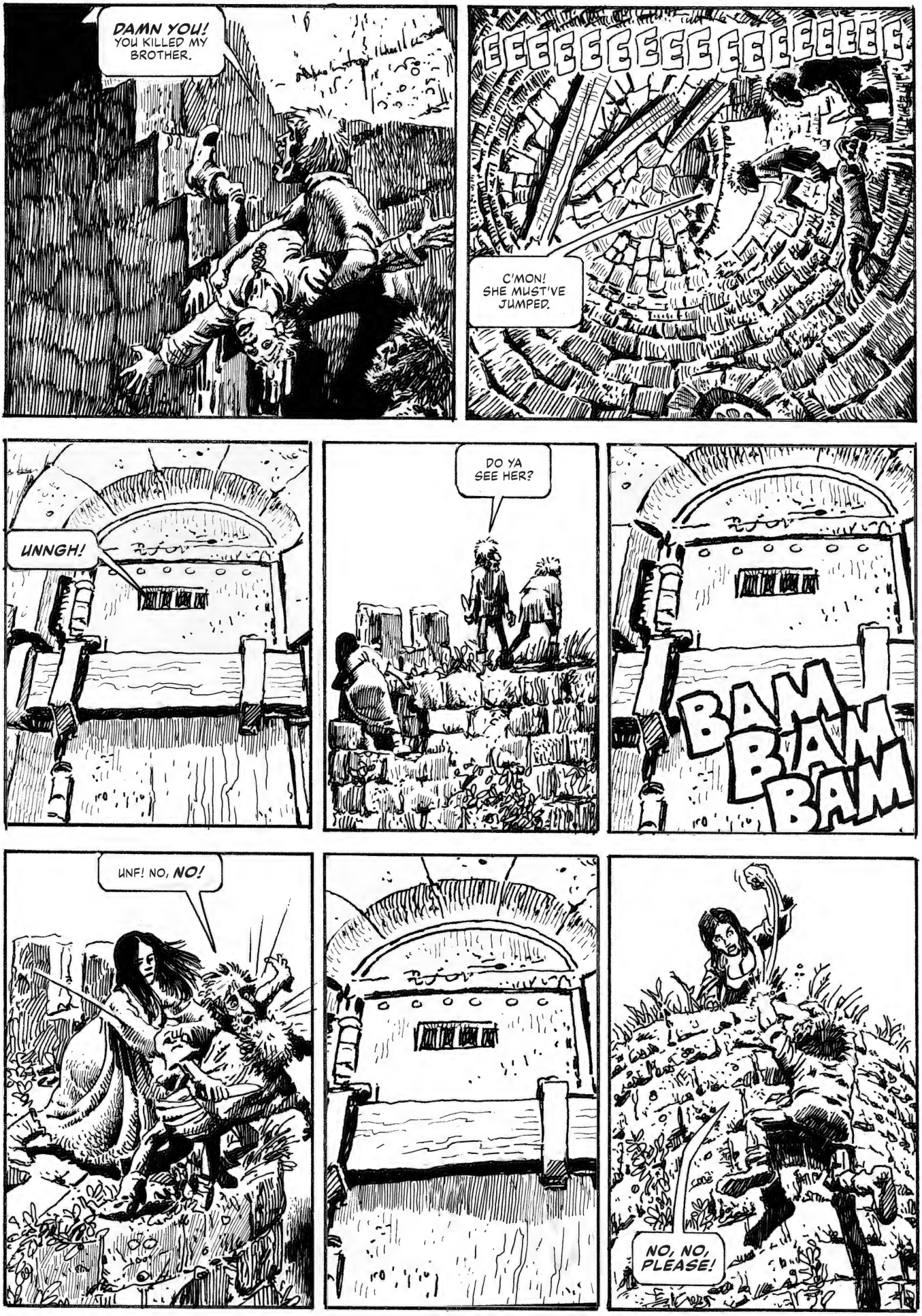
"HE KILLED MANY AND THEY FLED OUR SACRED LAND. BUT A STYGORON WOMAN TRICKED HIM, SEDUCED HIM...AND SLEW HIM. THE FEARSOME SEED SURVIVED. SHE BEGAT ME."

SO THE SPIRIT OF DROGIM IS WITHIN ME. DURING THE LUNAR CYCLE WHEN THE MOON IS FULL...I BECOME A BEAST LIKE MY FATHER.
TONIGHT, THE MOON IS FULL!


YES. I WAS SEEKING AID FROM A SORCERER, BUT I HAVEN'T FOUND HIM IN TIME.
PLEASE GRANT ME THIS FAVOR. THERE IS A STRONG CELL YET INTACT IN THIS TOWER. LOCK ME IN IT NOW AND RELEASE ME AT DAWN. I BEG YOU, LEST I SHED BLOOD.

THE DARKNESS CLOSED IN. ALL WAS SILENT FOR A WHILE. SHE HEARD HIS BREATHING BECOME LOUDER AND COARSER.

C'MON. IT'S DARK ENOUGH. THEY'RE STILL IN THE DONJON.
I'LL REPAY THAT CLOD. OOWCH! MY LEG IS STILL KILLING ME. SWELLIN' UP.
HEH, HEH, HEH! IT'LL BE SWEET WORK TONIGHT.
AH, THERE SHE IS. I GET FIRST CUT!
AAAH!
HA HA HA!
BAM BAM BAM
OOOH!
SKRIIK
POP!


DAMN YOU! YOU KILLED MY BROTHER.
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
C'MON! SHE MUST'VE JUMPED.
UNNGH!
DO YA SEE HER?
BAM BAM BAM
UNF! NO, NO!
NO, NO, PLEASE!

IT'S REALLY INCREDIBLE. THOSE THREE CAME BACK.
YOU BECAME A BEAST, JUST LIKE YOU SAID YOU WOULD. YOU BROKE THROUGH THE DOOR.
YOU KILLED THEM--
--AND YOU ATE THEM!

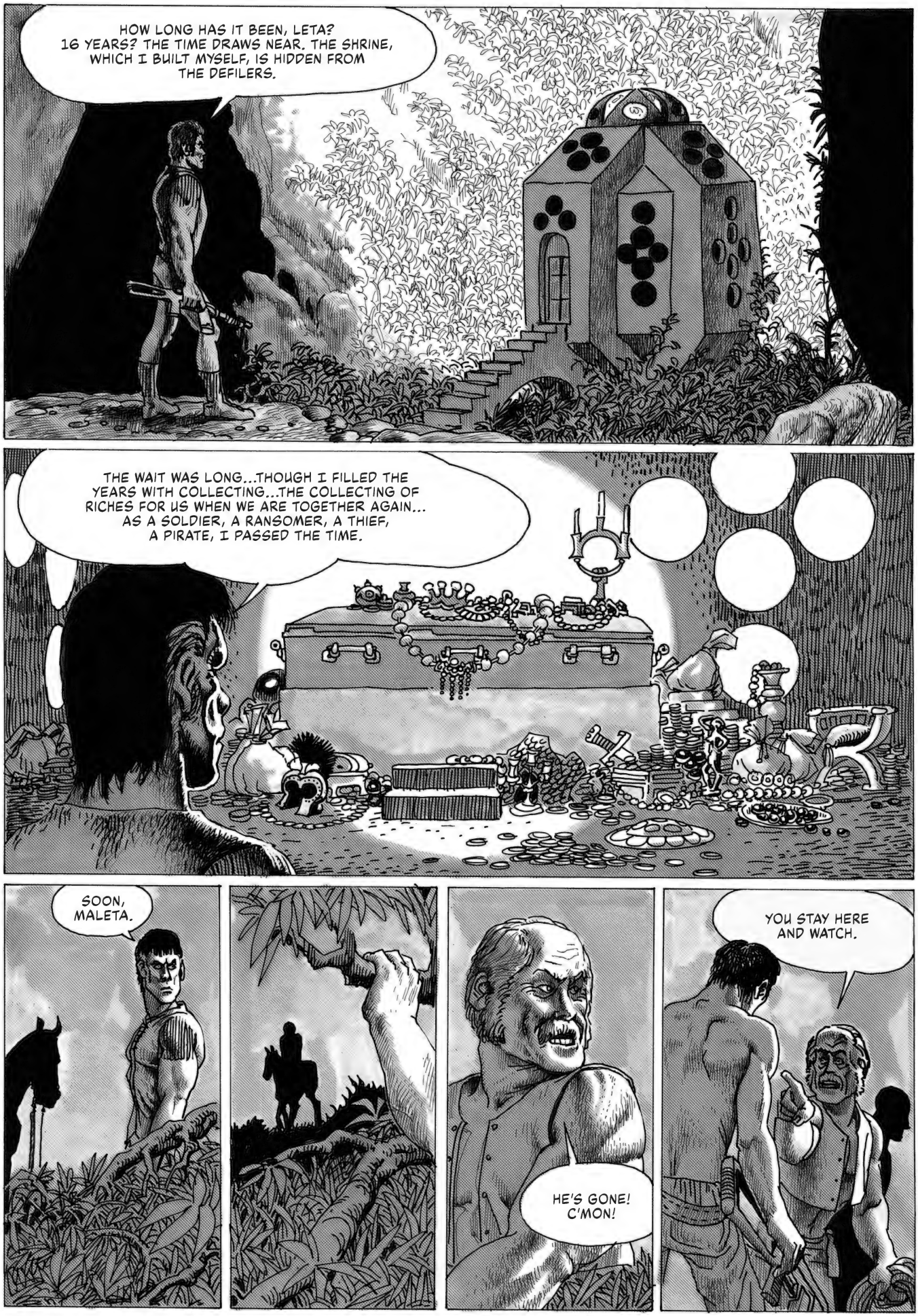
JON WULV RUNS. THE BLOODLUST IS NOW GONE AS IF IT WERE ONLY A DREAM. HE REMEMBERS NOTHING BUT A VAGUE SENSE OF VIOLENT FRENZY. HE RUNS IN HORROR. HE RUNS TO ESCAPE THE SPIRIT OF DROGIM, BUT IT IS ALWAYS THERE, IN HIS HEAD. THERE IS ONE ODD THING, THOUGH. THE REMAINS OF THE BODIES SHOWED THAT THEY HAD BEEN ROASTED OVER A FIRE. WEREWOLVES DON'T COOK THEIR VICTIMS, DO THEY?

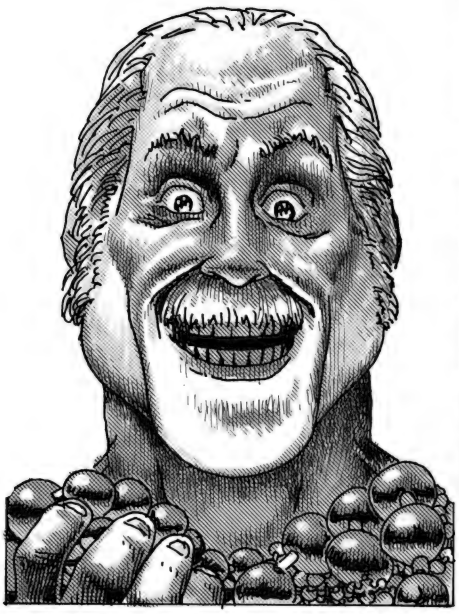
THE END

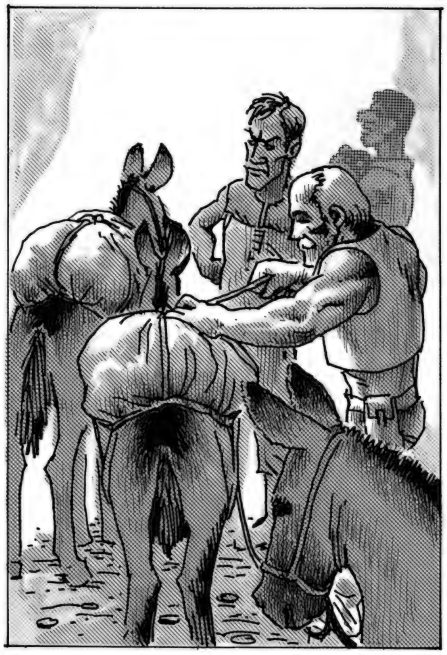
THE STORY OF
OTEG
FREELY ADAPTED FROM A JAPANESE FOLK TALE BY HARVEY SEA AND RICH CORBEN
© 1970 RICHARD CORBEN
LOOK, OTEG! A RIDER FROM THE WEST!
PERHAPS A MESSENGER FROM THE KING--HE WILL BE PLEASED TO HEAR OF OUR VICTORY!
OTEG! OTEG!
OTEG, SIRE, FORGIVE ME! I BEAR ILL NEWS! YOUR BETROTHED MALETA IS DYING!

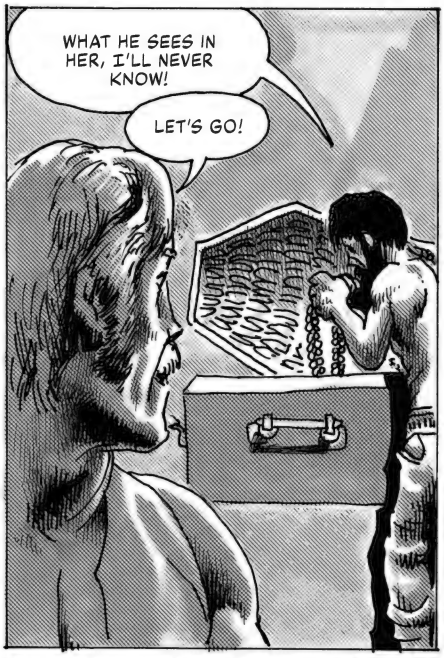
GERIK, YOU TAKE COMMAND! WHEN YOU ARRIVE IN ARNL, TELL THE KING WHERE I AM!
HURRY, SIRE, SHE CALLS FOR YOU!
MALETA!
OTEG, YOU'RE HERE. I WAS AFRAID I WOULDN'T SEE YOU AGAIN.
MALETA, DON'T TALK SO.
PLEASE LISTEN, MY LOVE. I MUST TELL YOU OF A DREAM BEFORE I DIE.
OH. :/CHOKE/: LETA!
I DIED, JUST AS A GIRL CHILD WAS BORN,...AND IT WAS ME. YOU WAITED FOR ME AND I GREW UP; THEN WE MARRIED! WE LIVED A LONG HAPPY LIFE.

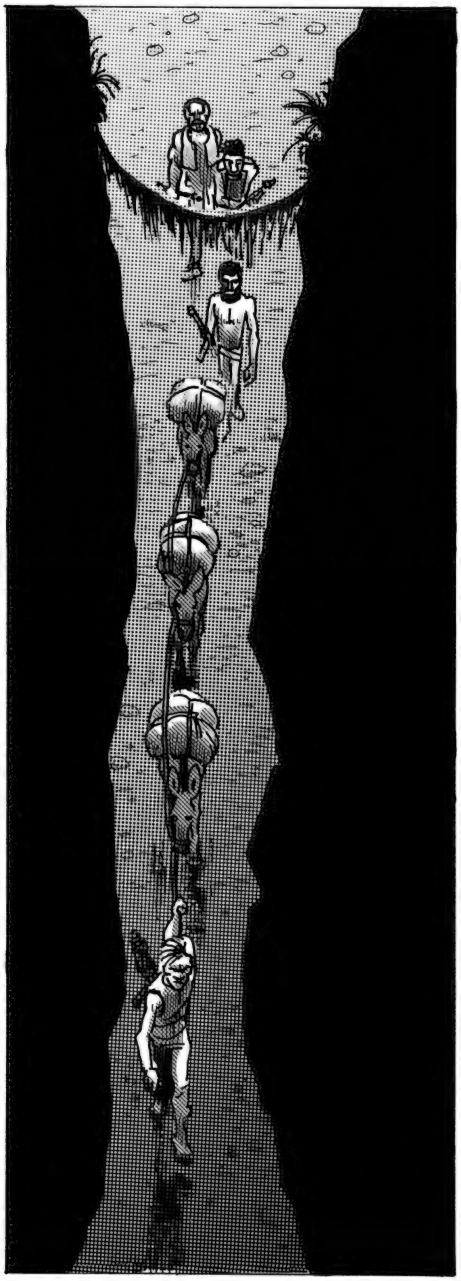
IT'S TRUE OTEG! IF YOU WAIT FOR ME, I'LL RETURN. I DO NOT FEAR DEATH, BECAUSE I KNOW WE'LL FIND EACH OTHER AGAIN.
YES, I WOULD WAIT; BUT YOU WON'T DIE. WE'LL BE MARRIED SOON,...MALETA...! MALETA...
...I'LL WAIT.
MALETA IS DEAD...! I WILL BUILD A TEMPLE WHERE SHE CAN REST.
GERIK!
OTEG, THE KING WAS SAD TO HEAR OF YOUR TRAGEDY. HE HAS GENEROUSLY DECIDED TO SHARE THE TREASURES WE BROUGHT FROM DESARNA.
IT WILL BE HEAPED UPON MALETA'S TOMB WHEN IT IS COMPLETE.
DON'T THROW YOUR LIFE AND FORTUNE AWAY FOR A DYING GIRL'S SICK DREAM.
LEAVE MY PRESENCE... OR DIE!!
VERY WELL; THIEVES AND GHOULS WILL HAVE YOUR SHARE.


HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN, LETA? 16 YEARS? THE TIME DRAWS NEAR. THE SHRINE, WHICH I BUILT MYSELF, IS HIDDEN FROM THE DEFILERS.
THE WAIT WAS LONG...THOUGH I FILLED THE YEARS WITH COLLECTING...THE COLLECTING OF RICHES FOR US WHEN WE ARE TOGETHER AGAIN... AS A SOLDIER, A RANSOMER, A THIEF, A PIRATE, I PASSED THE TIME.
SOON, MALETA.
HE'S GONE! C'MON!
YOU STAY HERE AND WATCH.

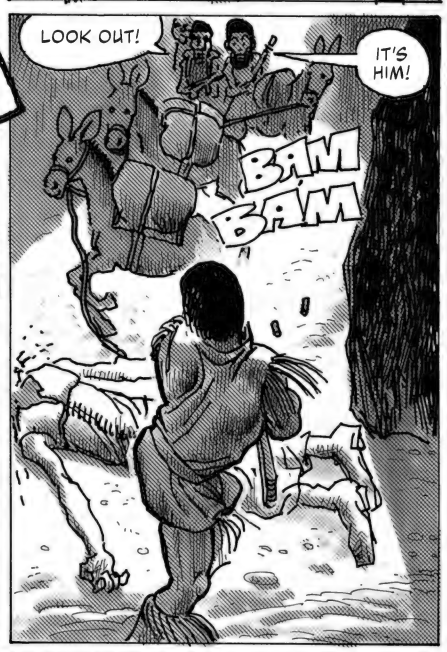


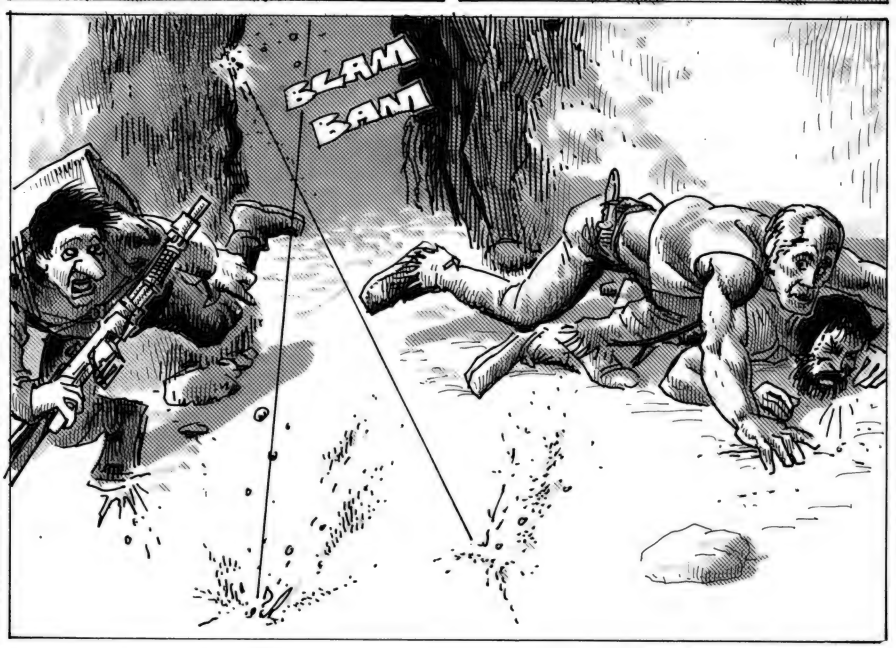



WHAT HE SEES IN HER, I'LL NEVER KNOW!
LET'S GO!



BLAM


LOOK OUT!
IT'S HIM!
BAM BAM


BLAM BAM

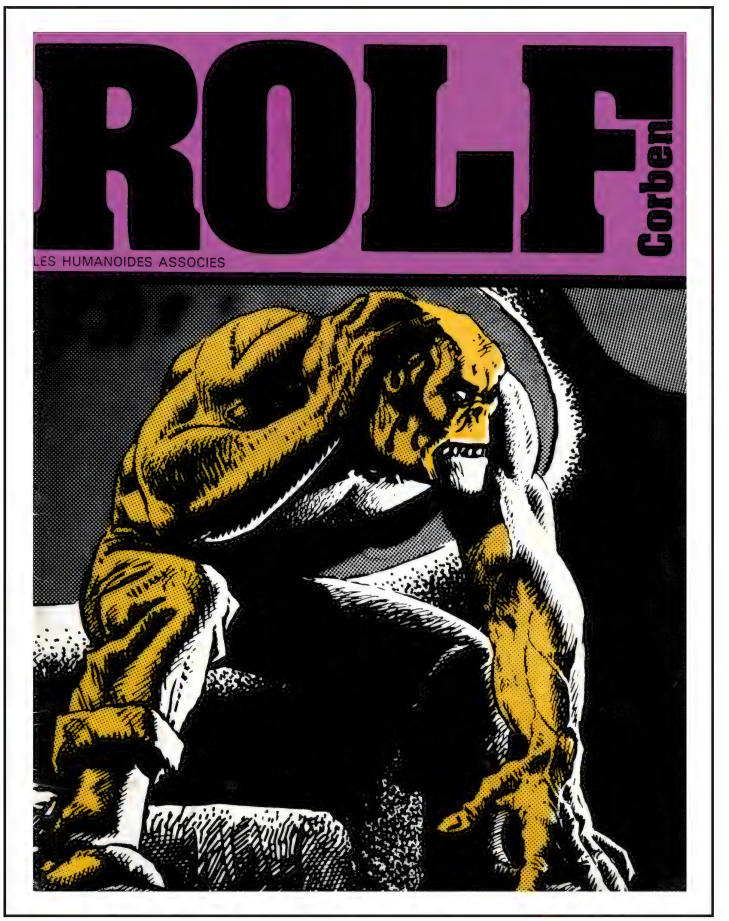
HE MUST'A GOT SORCA...! AND LEMNOK!
GOD! HE'S GOT US TRAPPED IN HERE!
NO HE DON'T! YOU TWO WATCH THIS ENTRANCE. I'LL CLIMB OUTTA THIS HOLE AND GET 'EM FROM BEHIND.
S'POSE THERE'S ANOTHER ENTRANCE!
BAM
BAM
AARGH!
SCUM!
OTEG! TURN AROUND.
GERIK...YOU...
CLIK
KLAK
YARGH

MUD
BUMP
AAG!
SLICE
JAB
ZUK
CRICK
KRAK
UUUNNNN
KRUNCH
KRUD
KRUD

MALETA...! WHERE ARE YOU...?
MY DARLING, I KNEW YOU'D COME.
I'M DYING, MALETA, BUT IT'S ALL RIGHT... 'CAUSE AS I DIE, A BABY BOY WILL BE BORN; ME. WAIT, LETA, AND I WILL RETURN...
THUP
OH...OTEG, MY BELOVED, I TRIED TO COME BACK IN A BRAND NEW BODY...BUT I COULDN'T.
BUT NOW WE WILL BE TOGETHER...
...IN DEATH!
END

ROWLF AFTERWORD

JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA



Cover of the 1975 French edition of *Rowlf* published by Les Humanoïdes Associés.
This edition was published in an oversized format (9.53" x 13")

Richard Corben always loved dogs. In an early interview, he said:

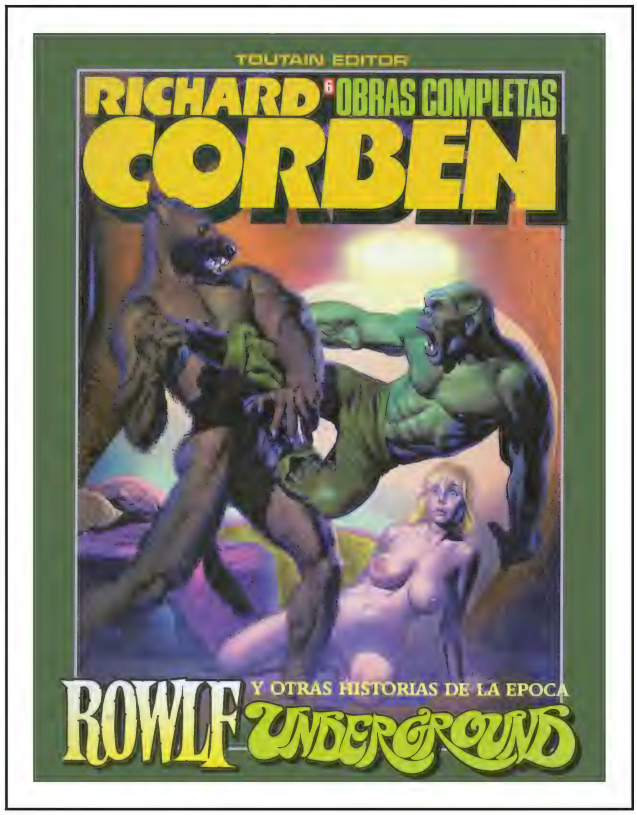
"I'm a dog person… I relate to dogs much more than to cats. In fact, that's why I've written many of my stories to dogs and wolves – 'The Beast of Wolfton' and 'Rowlf.'"

From early on, canines were prominently featured in his stories. His first comic, drawn as a child, was dedicated to his family dog, Trail, and portrayed him as a superpowered hero who often saved the day. These charming tales already showcase his great innate skill and imagination. Trail's action-packed stories were a sign of things to come.

When he grew up, he attended the Kansas City Art Institute and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Some mythological prints from his student days survive and already demonstrate his budding style and interest in fantastical subject matter. This knowledge of printmaking probably helped him invent the elaborate color process that he would apply to much of his work a decade later. In the

meantime, he was very interested in animation, and his father bought him a movie camera. He made several 8 mm animated films, including a seven-minute school project, *The Labors of Hercules*. This film led to his first professional job as an animator and cameraman at a company called Calvin.

The firm specialized in industrial or mechanical animation, which was boring to him. However, in his spare time, Corben completed a fantasy animated film, *Neverwhere*, in which his best-known character, Den, first appeared. Likewise, *Rowlf* was initially planned as a film, this time stop motion, and he worked on it for a couple of years, aided by his friend Dave Holman, who designed the vehicles seen in the story and coplotted some scenes. He also made sculpted figures of some of the characters to be animated. Eventually, he decided that producing a comic using these characters and vehicles for reference would be more practical.

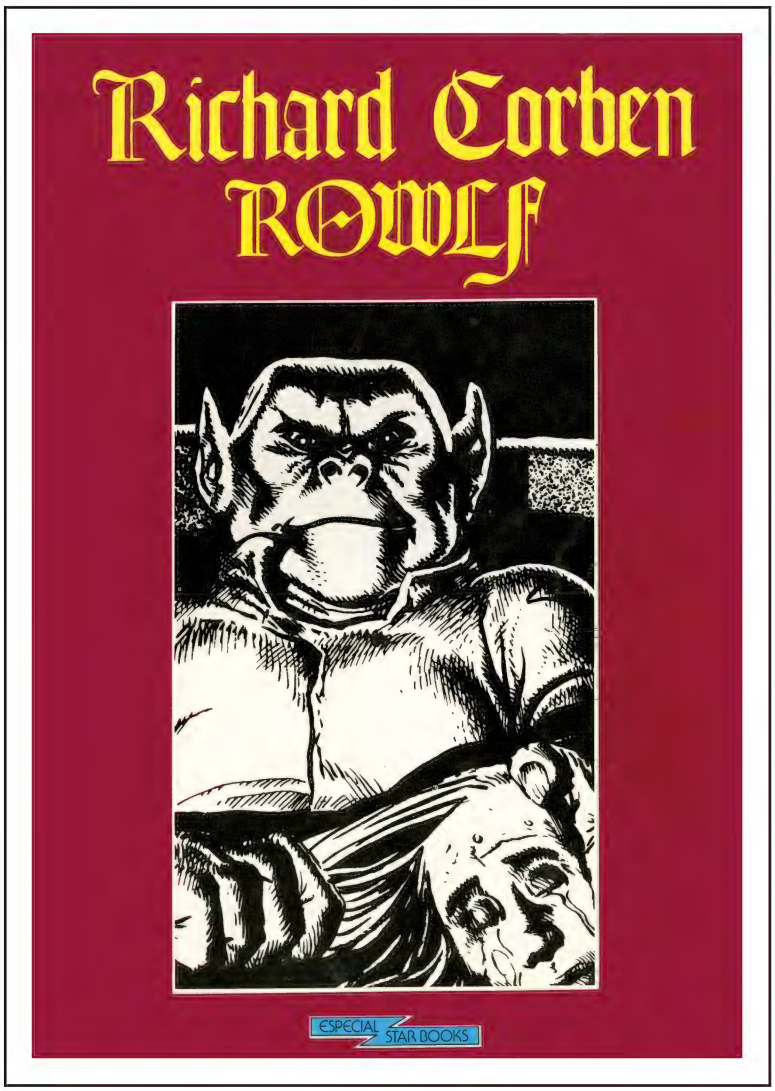


Between 1970 and 1971, Corben drew "The Story of Rowlf" in two issues of the upscale fanzine *Voice of Comicdom*. These were magazine sized (8.5 × 11 inches) and featured outstanding full-color wraparound covers by Corben. The sales of these fanzines were modest, so Corben reprinted *Rowlf* as a single-issue underground comic book published by Rip Off Press. He created a new color cover, a back cover, and a contents page. The smaller size (7 × 10 inches) and printing in newsprint did not do justice to his work, and the sales were somewhat disappointing. Corben was displeased with the sloppy reproduction quality in all the underground comics, but despite this, when asked about his work in 1973, Corben responded that *Rowlf* was indeed his favorite.

The story was then reprinted several times, but not very well. When *Heavy Metal* chose it for publication in 1979, they requested it to be colored. The original art had been done in careful black and white, with tones rendered in cross-hatching and screentone. The first part of the story was drawn on unusually large sheets of paper (18 × 23 inches), which allowed for very fine detail. The new color version eliminated much of this. It was also relettered with an unappealing font emulating text directly from a book. This variant was reprinted several times, including in international editions, until 1986.

Heavy Metal magazine played a significant role in Corben's career. On the one hand, it provided a platform for his outstanding color work, reproduced on coated stock at a larger size. But at the same time, the magazine's requests for colorized versions of stories executed successfully in black and white, such as *Bloodstar* and *Rowlf*, presented a challenge. These stories were not initially planned to be in color, nor did Corben himself color them; instead, the color was an afterthought. While reaching a wider audience, *Heavy Metal*'s variants replaced the originals in the public's eye.

Rowlf was the first part of a planned trilogy with two other were-beast stories. The second one, "The Beast of Wolfton," was printed in 1972 in the underground comic *Grim Wit* #1. This issue featured the werewolf protagonist in a full-color cover. The story diverged from *Rowlf* because the monster was now a traditional werewolf in a medieval setting. A year later, his first color comic for Warren Publications, "Lycanklutz," belonged to the same subgenre. "The Beast of Wolfton" is drawn similarly to *Rowlf*. The pages were executed



Cover of the 1976 Spanish edition of *Rowlf* published by Producciones Editoriales.

in black and white, with shading done in cross-hatching and applied screentone. Like *Rowlf*, when it was reprinted in *Heavy Metal*, they requested it be in color. Corben made color guides for this story, and his assistant Herb Arnold did the actual coloring. In this revision, some of the line art was lost. However, Corben added many new details to the original pages and even redrew an entire panel. These revised drawings are the ones we are using in this volume, reprinted from the original art.

A direct sequel to "The Beast of Wolfton," "The Spirit of the Beast," appeared eight years later to complete the trilogy. Unlike its predecessors, this story was presented in color for the first time in *Heavy Metal*. The original art is drawn in ink, with screentone, and highly rendered in gray colored pencils, making some panels appear boldly three-dimensional. These details were mostly lost when colored, so we have chosen to present it here in black and white, reproduced from the original plates. It now shows even the subtlest details and perfectly complements the other two stories.

Corben also drew other stories featuring werewolves, several of which were compiled in 1984 by Catalan Communications in a book titled *Werewolf*. "The Beast of Wolfton" and "The Spirit of the Beast" (both in color) were included, as were two of the stories Corben wrote for *Creepy* magazine and two later ones for *Heavy Metal*. However, *Rowlf* was not included in this selection.

The publication history of the last story in this book is somewhat mysterious. It stands out as a singularity in Corben's career. It is a free adaptation of a literary work by Lafcadio Hearn, an author who emigrated to Japan and wrote the first English collection of traditional Japanese ghost stories. His "The Story of O-Tei" became Corben's "The Story of Oteg." In the original, a man named Nagao loses his beloved O-Tei until she returns to him, reincarnated seventeen years later, and they live happily ever after. In Corben's version, Nagao becomes Oteg, and O-Tei is now Maleta. Although she dies at the beginning of the story, promising to return, the story takes a much different path. Corben infused it with violence, lust, and greed and changed the ending to a horror twist worthy of the EC Comics he read as a child. Thematically, it fits perfectly with *Rowlf*: it takes place in a vaguely medieval fantasy world where they have modern firearms.

And like the *Rowlf* trilogy, "The Story of Oteg" is visually sumptuous. Corben drew the story using DuoShade paper, allowing him to render areas in textures that were revealed when a chemical product was applied. This technique gave the pages a unique, highly detailed style. It was first published in 1971 in the anthology *Promethean Enterprises* #3. It printed rather well in magazine format. However, subsequent reprintings were disastrous. In 1986, it was reproduced in the second volume of the inaccurately titled Catalan Communications series *Richard Corben Complete Works*. This printing was terrible: Most of the carefully applied textures were either gone or muddied. The following year, Corben tried to rescue it by making a new version that mostly eliminated its DuoShade tones and was hand colored by Philip DeWalt. The result appeared in a small comic book format in the second issue of *Children of Fire*. Fortunately, the original pages have been carefully preserved, and "The Story of Oteg" is presented here for the first time with pristine reproduction.

As we have seen, dogs and wolves were the first protagonists of Corben's comics, such as those in the stories contained in this volume. His first published hero, Rowlf, was a well-meaning and brave dog-human hybrid, defined by the unique blend of innocence and courage that later Corben characters like Den, Razar, Bloodstar, and Dimento would exemplify. In the early stories presented here, Corben already imagined worlds that blended genres. As he stated back then when asked why he preferred *Rowlf* to other comics:

"For me to enjoy illustrating a story, it's got to have some bizarre element to it—a character, a setting, something that's really out of the ordinary. That's why I'm most at home with horror, fantasy, and science fiction."

And Corben's singular vision of horror, fantasy, and science fiction became, indeed, the foundation of his remarkable career.

José Villarrubia
Los Angeles, August 1, 2024

GLOSSARY OF SHADING TECHNIQUES IN DRAWING:

Hatching is a technique that uses closely spaced parallel lines to create shading. When the lines are placed at an angle and overlap, it's called **cross-hatching**.

Screentone is a substitute for hand-drawn hatching, used to add textures and shades. It involves transferring patterns from adhesive transparent sheets onto paper. Well-known brands include Zip-A-Tone, Chart-Pak, and Letratone.

DuoShade paper reveals patterns when a liquid developer is applied, adding three-dimensional effects to drawings. Popular brands include Craftint and Grafix DuoShade.

Meet Richard Corben

• Well, to start off this interview Rich, a question that has always interested me is that of finding out when an artist started drawing as well as became involved with comic art.

I'm sure you've heard the answer to this one many times before. I started drawing long before I could read and write. I was always interested in story telling with my artwork. My elder brother had comicbooks, which I traced and copied the characters out of. The only ones I can remember are Superman, Tarzan, and Micky Mouse. My first original comic strip was centered around my families pet dog Trail. About eight large issues of Trail Comics were produced before I went onto other th - ings.

• A typical beginning! How old are you then, and is there a chance that you too might have grown up on E. C. comics, such as I?

I'm just over 28. Yes, indeed! I especially liked their horror and Science Fiction lines. I didn't care too much for the crime stories. I remember that I was very upset when they went out of business.

• As was I. I see a blend of many influences in your work, although you're style is fresh, new, vibrant, and dynamic. Do you have a list of artists that you advise?

Of the great nonliving artists, my favorites are: Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Garavaggio, Durer, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Rodin, and Parish. The artists I most admire who are still alive and working are: Frank Frazetta, Wally Wood, and Alex Toth. I would like to believe that all of the above gentlemen have influenced my style, but I haven't consiciously tried to copy their work or style since I was in Art school.

• And from what I've seen, you haven't. Really Rich, VoC is extremely fortuniate in having you. Your work is well done technically and has a great deal of polish. Have you had any art training.

I have a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute.

• I know that your hobbies include painting, drawing comic strips, and film making. Does your wife share your interests?

My wife, Dona, is very enthusiastic about my comic strip work. She is especially helpful with suggestions when I'm writting a story. We often discuss the work of various pro and fan artists. She actively participates in our film productions, not only with the creative end of production, but completely handles such mundane chores as securing materials and props, making arrangements with our friends to be actors and plays the role of the heroine in our latest film.

• When did you begin film making and how many films have you made?

You might say I started film making when I got my first movie camera which was about when I was a sophomore in High School. But I had been making flip page animation in the margin of books long before that. At first I animated isolated scenes from stories and although I enjoyed it very much, it wasn't very meaningful to anyone I showed the films to. During this time I was also doing alot of work with animated models including clay snakes, rubber dinosaurs, Rubber Tarzan, and several Greek warriors made of wire and cloth. I finally decided that if I was ever going to impress anyone, I would have to film a complete story. That was Gateway to Terror adapted from a Science Fiction magazine story. After that I did The Labors of Hercules based

Animation Artist Dick Corben proudly displays the award won by his film "Neverwhere."

The magic world of Richard Corben./ by Rudi Franke

on the Greek myths. With financial help from my father I switched to 16 mm and did several Horror live action films with some friends of mine. My last film NeverWhere a combination of graphic animation and live action, won a CINE Golden Eagle and the President of Japan Cultural Society award.

• Do you like film making more than painting or comic art?

Depending upon when you asked that question, you might get different answers. I go through phases of different interests. Generally Painting and comic art aren't nearly as demanding of my energy as film animation. This statement is more understandable if you consider that I made over 8,000 drawings for NeverWhere. On the other hand, animation is movement and when done well, animated characters have an almost magical life of their own.

• Are you working on a film now? Is it being done in the same animation technique?

My wife, several friends and I are working on another film called Xenogames. It is completely different from the technique used in NeverWhere. Xenogames is a mixture of live action and animated models. It is a Science Fiction adventure story with Aliens, a space ship and a two headed dragon. We are about one third into the production and don't expect to finish for at least another year.

• Have you had much contact with fandom and fanzines?

The first fanzine I ever had was Dennis Cunningham's Weirdom. That was about two years ago. Dennis and I got together on a special Plague issue of Weirdom which was finally printed early in 1969 (Dennis there announced that it would be the last issue until he got out of the Army). Voice of Comicdom was the first fanzine to publish my strips, which was about the middle of '68. Presently my work appears in VofC and Mark Franks fantafilmzine Photon. My wife and I attended our first convention at the World Con in St. Louis. We met quite a few there including Vaughn Bode, Jeff Jones, and Larry Todd, as well as pro-publisher Jim Warren.

• This issue, Rowlf is the special feature. How long have you been working on it?

Rowlf was first concieved a couple of years ago not as a comic story, but as a film. After several futile attempts at producing it, we gave it up for another script. After Monsters Rule was finished, I was looking for a story to appear in VofC and I remembered Rowlf. I gave this much thought and finally decided that I could do the story justice in the comic strip medium. Much preliminary work had already been done. This became very useful when adapting it to the comic strip. Several models of the characters had been built. These were now used to draw from. A friend of mine, Dave Holman, deserves all of the credit for designing the demons tanks and equipment, their characterizations and the plotting of certain scenes. It is difficult to say how much actual drawing time was spent on the final pages. I occasionally did two or three pages a week working evenings and weekends, but I didn't work on it constantly.

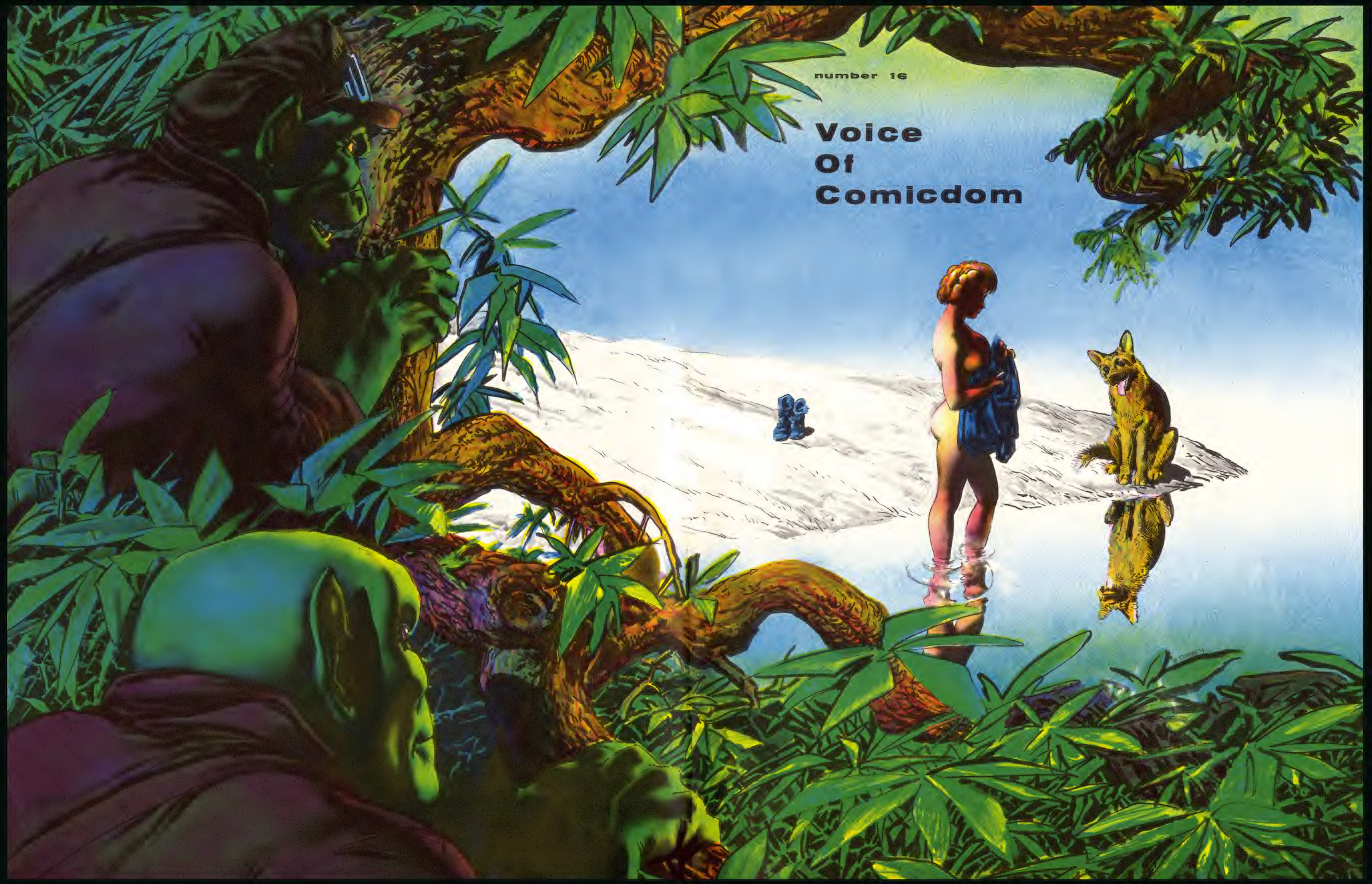
• Your work is great. Tell me, have you had any professional appearances?

Only one in the field of magazines. That was a cover for Fantasy and Science Fiction which appeared on the September issue of 1967. In the field of industrial films my work appears anonymously in a great many films.

• The next and last question really goes without asking, but here goes anyway. What are your future goals?

I would like to be a comic artist and cover artist but still have enough time to make films, or I would like to be a film producer and still have time to paint covers and draw comic strips.

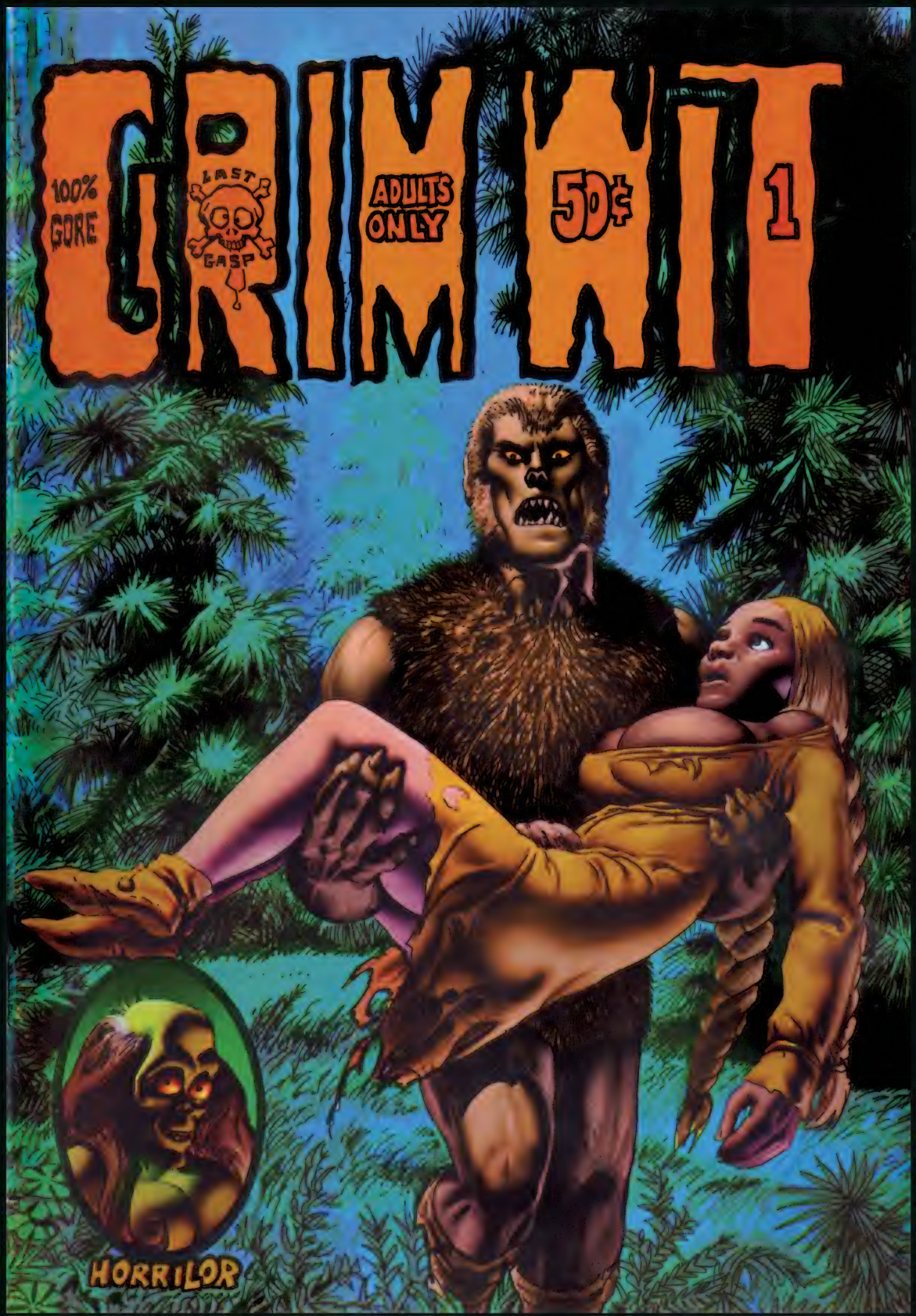
• And it looks like your goal is becomming a realization, as I understand Warren has just purchased one of your paintings. Now onto a visual experience that you will not forget--a true graphic novel of historic importance. I present to you Rowlf, Part 1... END



Voice of Comicdom #16 Wraparound Cover

Voice of Comicdom #17 Front Cover

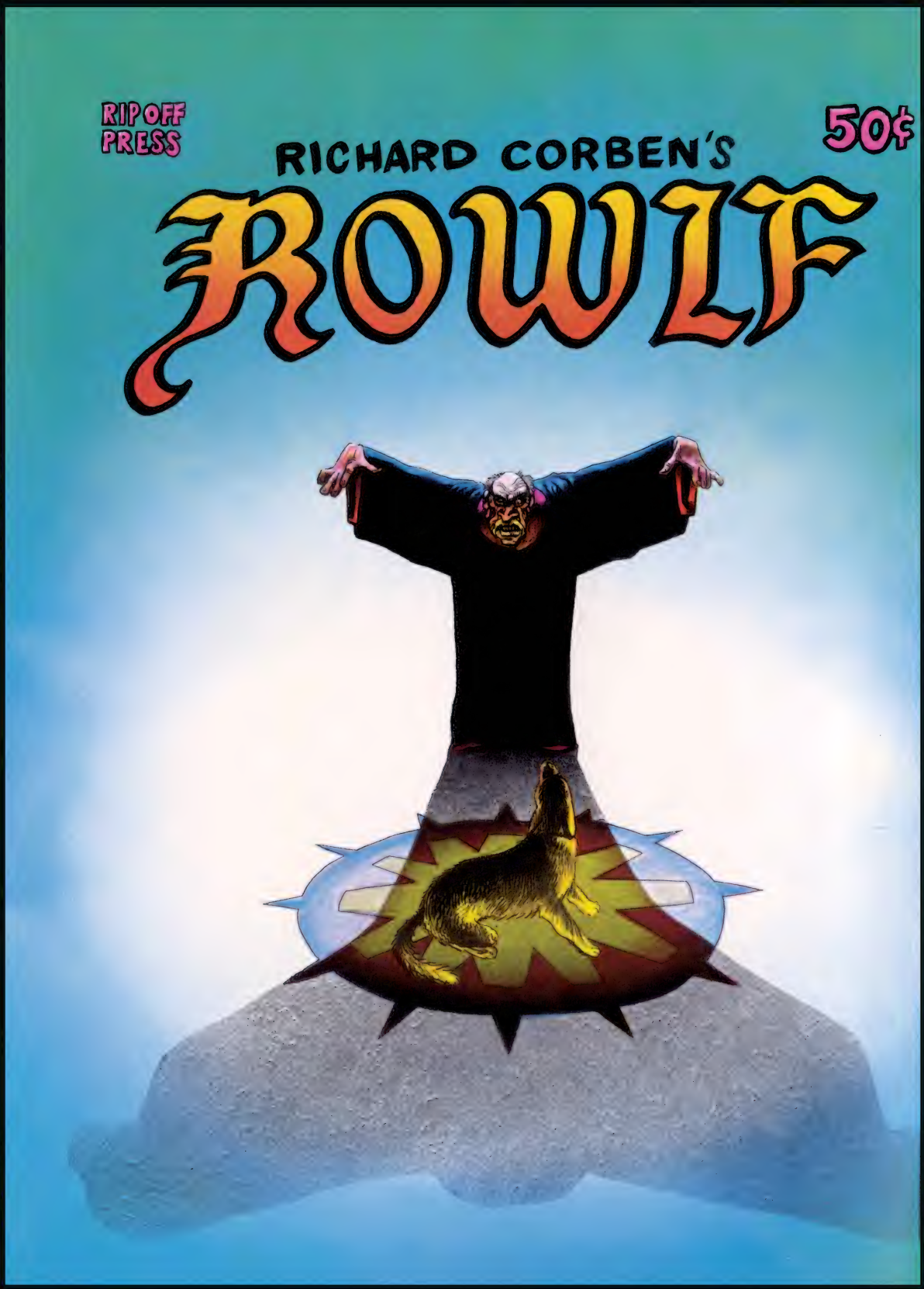
Voice of Comicdom #17 Back Cover



Grim Wit #1 Front Cover

SKULL
ENIGER
ENIGER'S GOT VIOLENCE!
SKULL'S GOT HORROR!
GRIM WIT'S GOT ALL THAT AND MORE BETWEEN ITS COVERS!
ALL KINDS OF NEAT STUFF IN ADULT COMIX THESE DAYS.
BUY 'EM!

Grim Wit #1 Back Cover

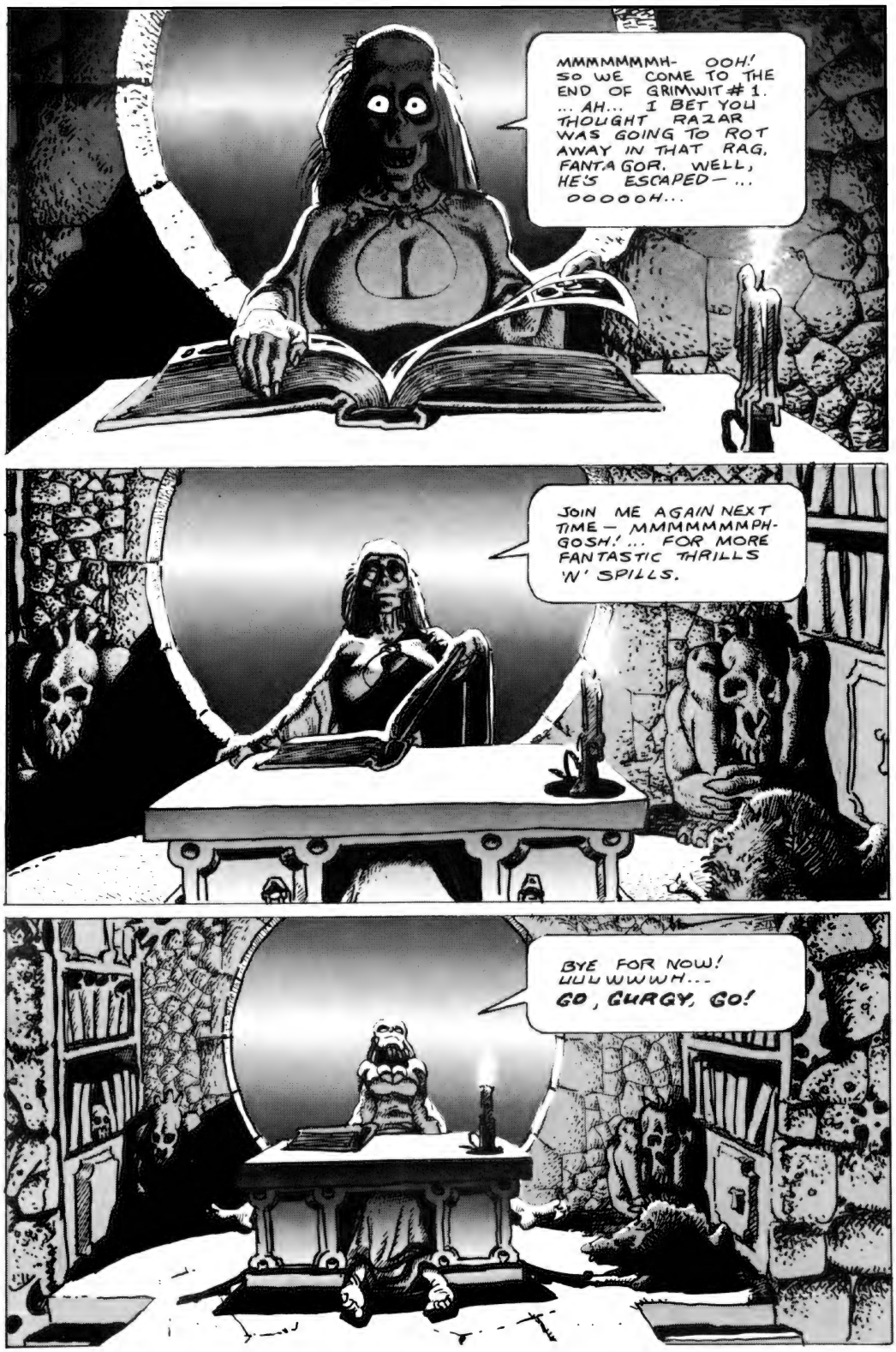


Rowlf #1 First Printing Front Cover

Werewolf Front Cover

I JUST LOVE THE SENSUOUS WIND, ... THE RAIN...
... THE LIGHTNING. IT IS THE MAJESTIC PRIMEVAL FORCES LOCKED IN EROTIC STRUGGLE...
THUNDA BOOM
THUNDEROUS ORGASM! NATURE UNLEASHING BRIEF GLIMPSES OF ITS AWSOME POWER.
COME WITH ME INTO THE MAGIC REALM OF ADULT COMIX. REMEMBER, ADULTS NEED FANTASY JUST AS MUCH AS KIDS. I'M YOUR AMOROUS HOSTESS, HORRILOR.
GRIM WIT NO. 1, © 1972 RICHARD V. CORBEN. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NOTHING MAYBE REPRINTED WITHOUT PERMISSION. THIS 2ND EDITION PUBLISHED BY LAST GASP ECO FUNNIES, P.O. BOX 212, BERKELY, CAL. 94704.
HARROWING HEIGHTS

Grim Wit #1 Inside Front Cover


MMMMMMMH- OOH! SO WE COME TO THE END OF GRIMWIT #1. ... AH... I BET YOU THOUGHT RAZAR WAS GOING TO ROT AWAY IN THAT RAG, FANTAGOR. WELL, HE'S ESCAPED— ... OOOOOH...
JOIN ME AGAIN NEXT TIME— MMMMMMMPH- GOSH! ... FOR MORE FANTASTIC THRILLS 'N' SPILLS.
BYE FOR NOW! UUUWWWH... GO, GURGY, GO!

Grim Wit #1 Inside Back Cover

GREETINGS, GRIM GRABBERS! THIS IS YOUR HORNY HOSTESS, HORRILOR, EAGER AND WAITIN' TO LAY ON YA... ... SOME NIFTY GOODIES, I'VE GATHERED UP FROM MY GRIM WIT GRUESOME LIBRARY, HERE IN HARROWING HEIGHTS.
AZTIQUE
SAGA OF ZEN
DRAGON LORE
HOLMAHUMOR
SO GET READY FOR SOME EXCITEMENT,-
EXCITEMENT
-ADVENTURE,-
ADVENTURE
-AND OTHER GOODIES. THIS IS A SPECIAL DRAGON ISSUE, SO RELAX AND GIVE ME YOUR ... FULL ... HARD... ... ATTENTION.
GRIM WIT, 2 © 1973 BY RICHARD CORBEN, JAXON, DOUGLAS MOENCH AND DAVE HOLMAN. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. DON'T REPRINT ANYTHING WITHOUT PERMISSION OR SUFFER THE CURSE OF THE GREEN APPLE QUICK-STEP. GRIM WIT IS PUBLISHED BY LAST GASP ECO FUNNIES, P.O. BOX 212, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA. 94704.

Grim Wit #2 Inside Front Cover

THIS IS THE LAND OF MYSTERIOUS FANTASIES.
BUT OUR TIME OF MAGIC IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE AGAIN. ALAS, THE COLOR FADES.
UNTIL NEXT TIME.

FARE WELL.

HI COMIC WEIRDOS! YES IT'S ME GURGY... FREE FROM THE SKULL DUNGEONS LONG ENOUGH TO TELL YA A TALE SO INTRICATE THAT I NEED A WHOLE BOOK TO DO IT. NOT ONLY DID I DIG THROUGH THE DUSTY DUNG HEAPS OF ANCIENT EIRVTHIAN LORE FOR FRAGMENTS OF A FANTASTIC STORY, BUT I SOUGHT A REMOTE HAIRY HERMIT (WHO CALLED HIMSELF GORE THOUGH EVERYONE KNEW HIM AS HARVEY) FOR THE STRANGE NARRATIVE. DETAILS OF THE LONG EXTINCT DEMON HORDE WERE RELATED BY THE OBSCURE MARTIAN MARTIAL HISTORIAN DAV HOLMA OF METHANE AND HE VOUCHES FOR THE ACCURACY..... SO, A LONG LONG TIME AGO BEGAN...
ROWLF © 1971 RICHARD V. CORBEN
PUBLISHED BY RIP OFF PRESS
BOX 14158, SAN FRANCISCO, 94114

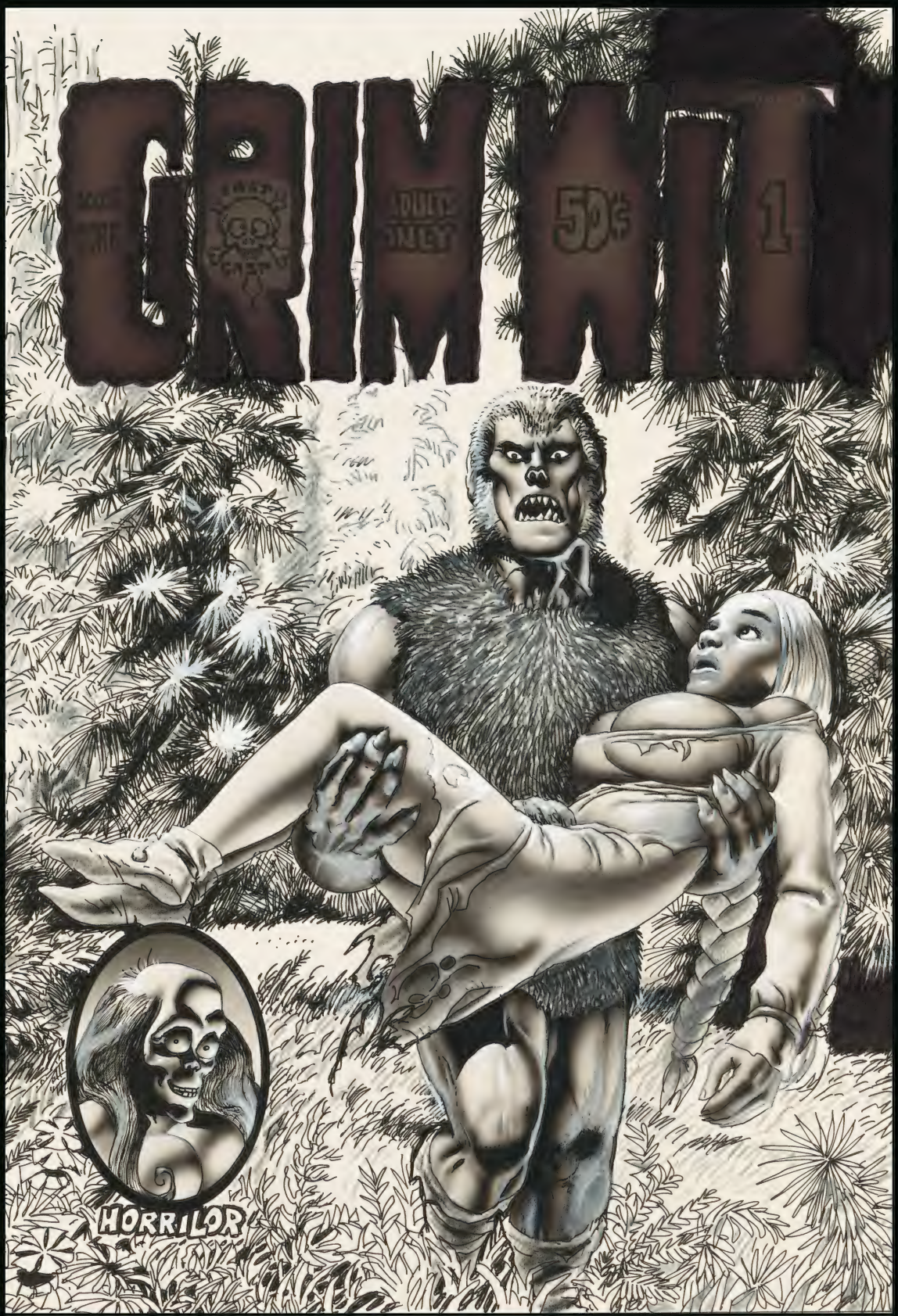
Rowlf #1 Inside Front Cover

...SO THERE YA HAVE IT. WHAT HAPPENED TO ROWLF AND MARYARA? ... WELL IT WASN'T NO FAIRY TALE HAPPY ENDING! THEY HAD THEIR PROBLEMS ... YOU SHOULD SEE THEIR KIDS!... HOOBOY!

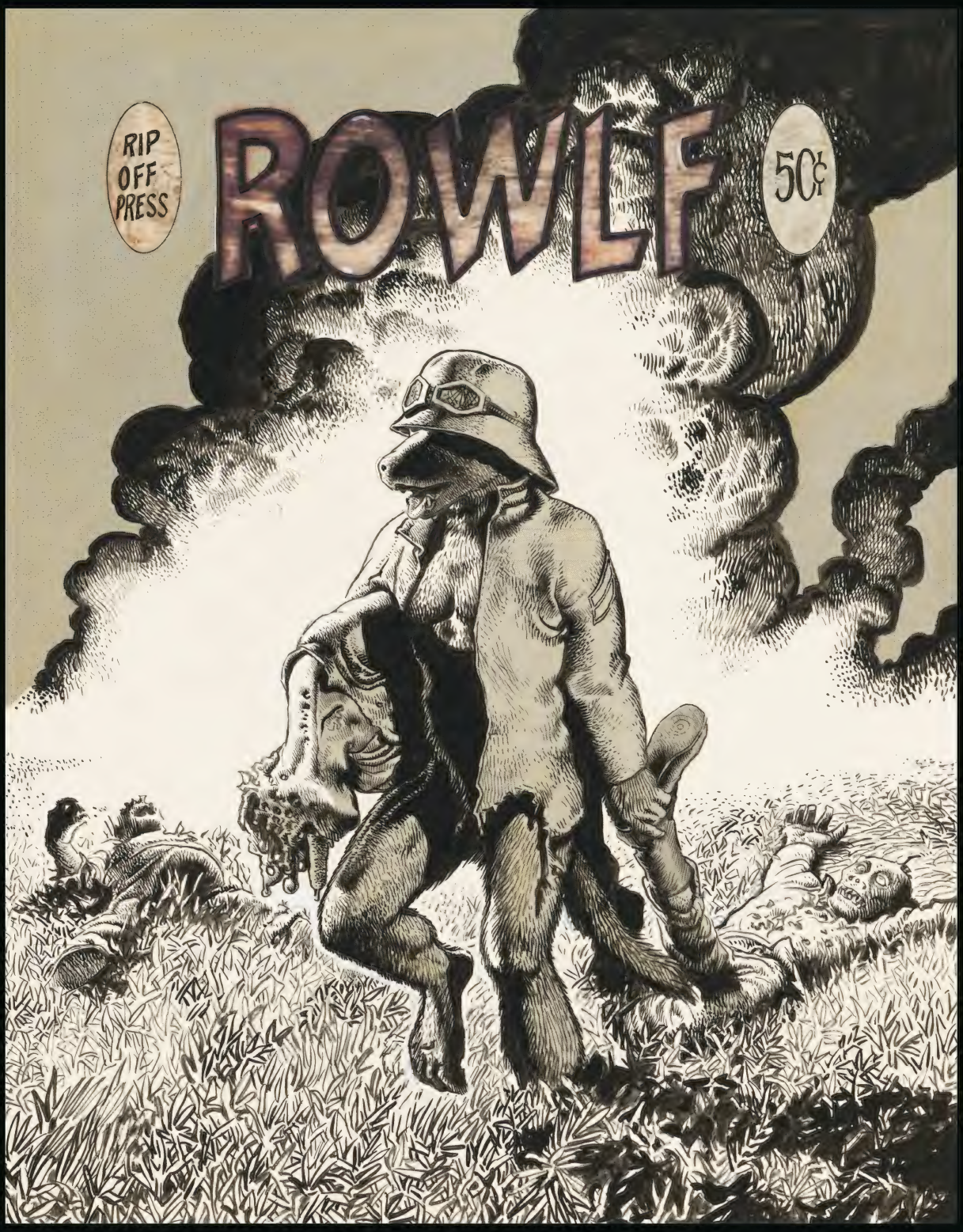
Rowlf #1 Inside Back Cover

Voice of Comicdom #16 Wraparound Cover Original Art

Voice of Comicdom #17 Back Cover Original Art

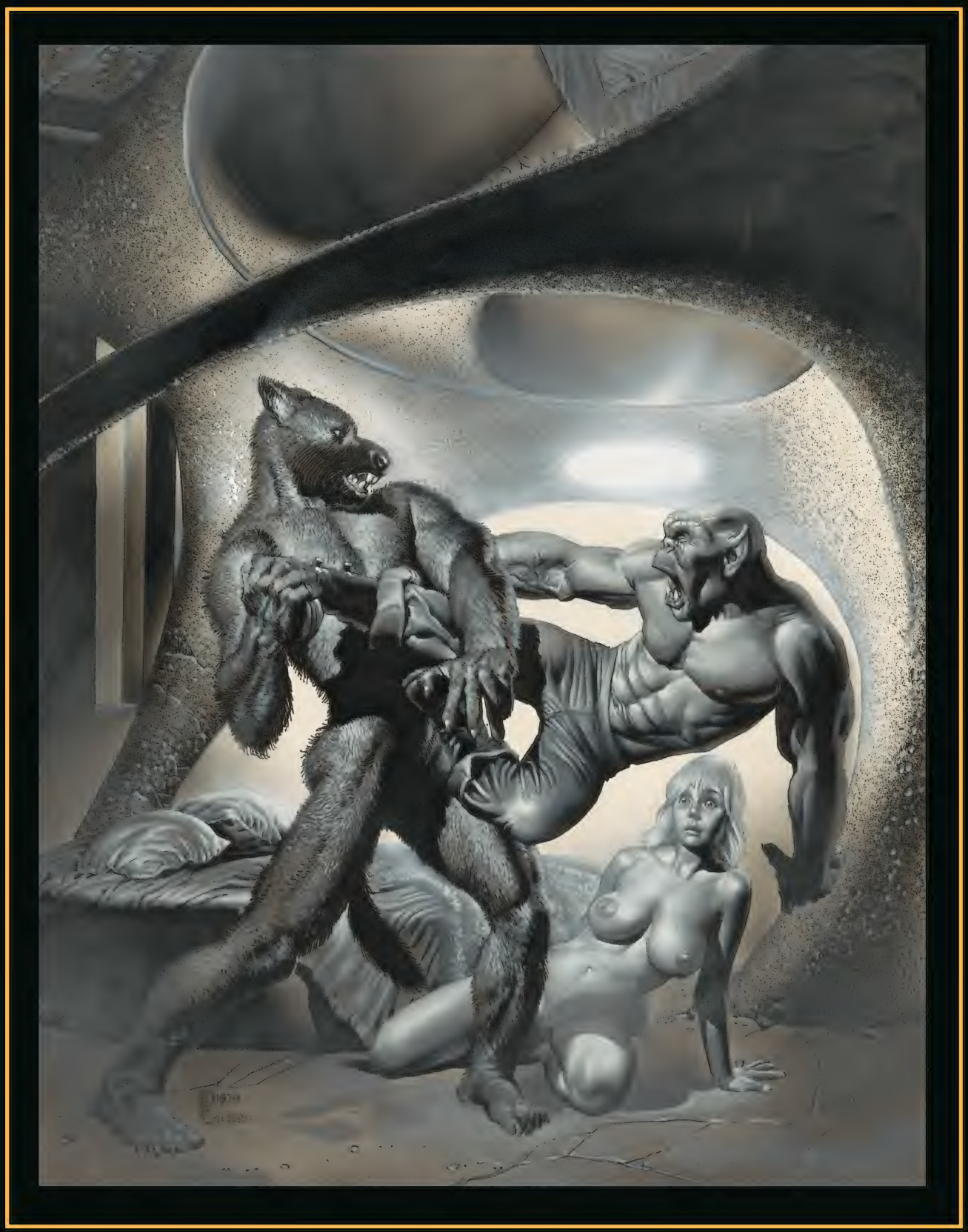


Grim Wit #1 Original Art



Rowlf #1 First Printing Back Cover and Second Printing Front Cover Original Art

Werewolf Front Cover Original Art



Beast Trilogy Front Cover Original Art

Above: a page from *Trail Comics*,
drawn by Richard Corben about *their family dog, Trail.*

TRAIL COMICS

Trail Comics was Corben's first comic book, created when he was around eight years old and in third grade. The series featured the heroic fantasy adventures of his family's pet dog, Trail, and spanned about eight issues. Although most of the comics have been lost, two issues still exist, giving us a glimpse into Corben's earliest art. They are presented here for the first time, courtesy of his family.

Top: Cover of *Trail Comics* #1
Bottom: *Trail Comics* #1

oop
DAGE
wild
TRial
whoth out
its okay
we
thanks
END

wee
well, Lets go to the parad
TRail
what do
you think you're doing

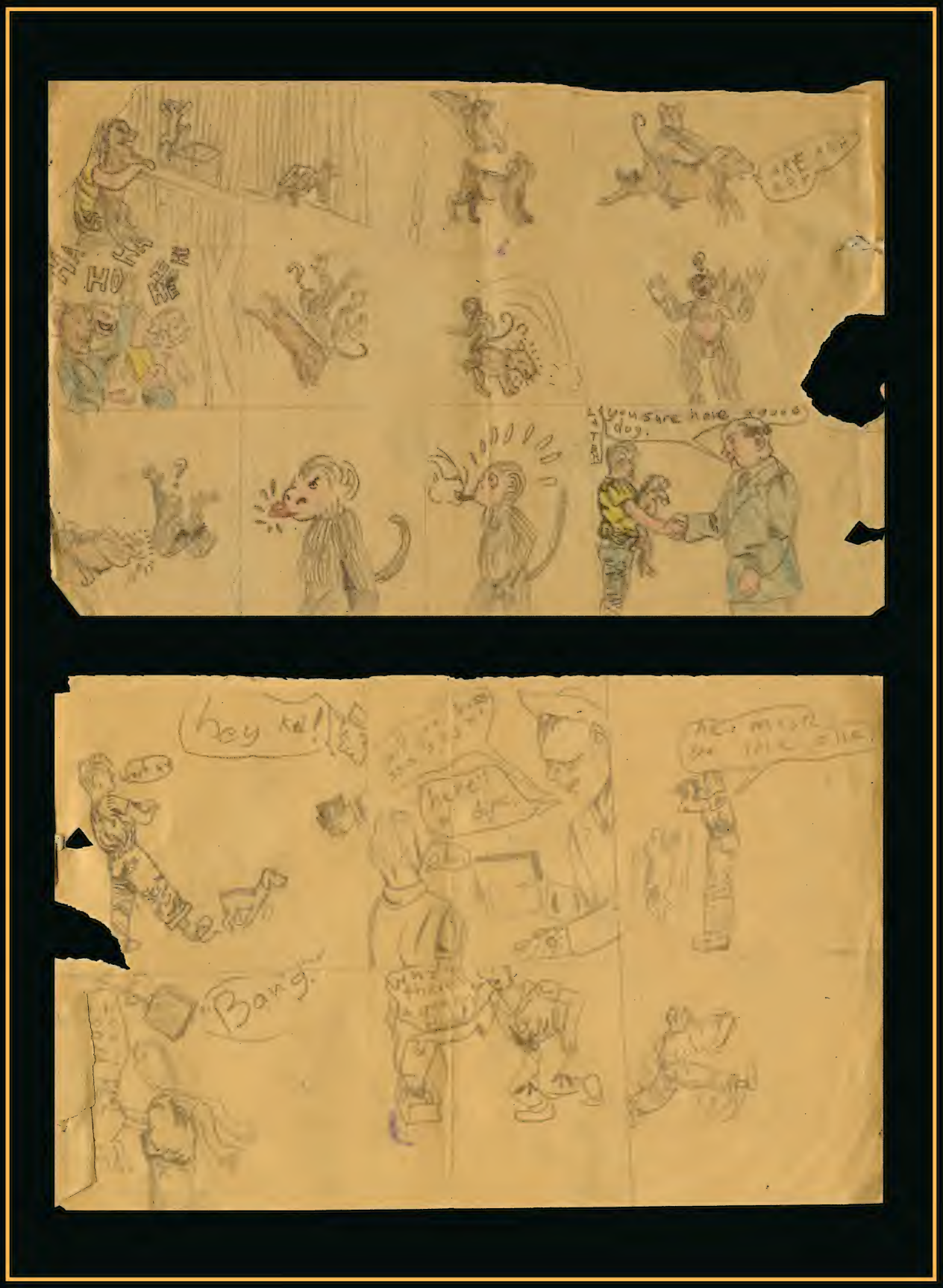
Why you
look at all that money!
THE END

THE LIFE OF TRAIL
I'm afraid we'll have to give some of the pups away! Billy do you want one?
Fred I will you like one!
Johnny got 6 new pups!
Well! we'll ask our mothers!
Well we'll have to look at them and see which one we want!
Mother!
Mother! I want that one
-and I want to name him TRAIL
Days later
End

to COLOR

TO COLOR Trail

Top: Cover of *Trail Comics* #2
Bottom: *Trail Comics* #2



Trail Comics #2

Let us
Trail
There are
yours
Trail

Don't guess
Get the
best

ORIGINAL LETTERING SCRIPT FOR *BEAST OF WOLFTON*

BEAS T OF WOLFTON

typeset in Stymie light
12 point
underlined in Bold

Richard Corben
27 West Bannister Road
Kansas City, Mo. 64114

942-7805

also ⇒ BEAST — Stymie Bold- 36
OF
WOLFTON

1 line — A dark form swung down,

1 line — stood watching,

1 line — turned to Wolfton,

1 line — and left.

1 3/4" column — More hot water, Marta. I must wash where ever the cur touched my body.

1 3/4 column — Yes my lady. Shouldn't I close the balcony door?

2 1/4" column — No. The fresh air and sunshine helps me to forget the stench that assailed me last night.

Center — A hand grasped/the balcony's edge.

Center — Two animal eyes/watched hungrily.

Center — Huge arms pulled so the/creature could see more.

Center — The servant saw,/ then Chabita.

Center — Come my lady,/we'll get/the Baron.

Center — He's gone,/Marta.

1" column — It was dusk when Sir Hornib and the soldiers returned to the castle. As the Baron's family and privileged friends ate, the knight related the day's adventure.

2 1/2 column — -then the unseen monster set a spell on one of the men. I pursued it but, like a formless wraith, it was gone.

2 1/2 column — Fear not gentle people; tomorrow I shall resume the quest. Tomorrow evening we shall gaze upon a bloody trophy, its head !

2 3/4" column — Too bad, Hornib. You'll miss the festivities. We're going to hang a Krind thief.

2" column — Growmmph What'sa- chomp, chomp, munch- krind?

2 1/4" column — The Krind was once a powerful primitive tribe that swarmed these hills in years gone by. The surviving members number about a dozen.

Center — Related to/the Picts?

1 3/4" column — Pardon me lord Baron, a"peeping Tom" was at my room today and I'm afraid he'll return.

BEAST OF WOLFTON 2

Why... that's disgraceful! None of my men would- I'll place a guard or two in the garden below your balcony. Perhaps we'll have a double hanging.

Thank you my Lord Baron.

Goody! No common bumpkin can gawk at my body and live.

He'll pay the supreme price for the view.

Lady Chabita's thoughts returned again and again to the prospect of the impending party, and wished sincerely that Hornib would share the thief's fate. She endured his lust again. Her frustration and hatred grew.

My loins burn with desire!

YOU GODDAMNED SLAVERING MAGGOT, LET ME BE! Oh GOD! (whimper)

When is the hanging?

The cook said before noon.

Did you see his gruesome face? all bugeyed and spitting!

The hanging spectacle was a relief from the the days boredom. The Krind hermit had stolen one of the Baron's swine and butchered it. His guilt was proven on rather circumstantial evidence, but it was sufficient.

He, he, he!

Haw, haw! When he shit his pants, I thought we'd really have a mess to clean up . Haw, haw, haw!

My lady, LOOK!

It's the peeper. The quards don't see him. He looks so strange.

MARTA, don't faint on me now!

uunh!

Oooh!

The unconscious lady Chabita was carried back into the garden, through a hidden underground passage, and into the forest.

Finally reaching the abandoned country house, th e creature stopped at the barn.

Ooh! You are the monster they seek.

You set the guards to catch me eh? Then I might have been hung for your pleasure as well as that poor devil.

BEAST OF WOLFTON 3

... Yes, I'm the monster. The seed of the beast was created when I saw my own father tortured and hung for safeguarding his family and his land...my land.

The worms that live in WULV, the place you call Wolfton, are aliens.

The beast stared at Chabita for long moments, then grabbed her.

Don't be afraid. I don't kill women and children as does the fiend in Wulv.

I'm sorry to do this but you might run away, and in case you didn't know, this forest can be dangerous.

Tell me, do you love your husband?

What? .../Why yes, of course.

Too bad.

Nothing! We'll go back to the forest house. It found food there. It might return.

Soon the group was cantering along the narrow path that led to the place where Chabita lay tied in the hayloft.

For long stretches the road was lined with trees and heavy undergrowth that squeezed the way torturously.

But, in other places, the road was wide and smooth.

My lord! My lord! Two of my comrades, Ken and James, are gone! They're nowhere in sight.

WHAT?

Damnation! It must have happened when we were going along single file.

NO! You mean the beast has taken them?

Yes, We must stay in a close group and move quickly!

We could reach the house sooner by cutting through the forest.

No! We'd be playing right into the monster's jaws.

That place is sure dark!

Do you think the beast is within?

Dismount and tie the horses near the well.

You go inside and start a fire in the hearth. We'll spend the night here.

Inside? ...er.../Yes sir.

BEAST OF WOLFTON 4

He's been in there/ long enough!

Look at the/ chimney. The/ fire is going.

I think I/ can hear him/ walking around.

The men drew/ their swords/ and entered,/ ready for battle.

Here he is./ What's the/ matter Albert?

His neck-/ (choke)

THE/ HORSES!

WHOA!/ WHOA!

After the men ran into the woods, the house was still.

to be continued

Here,/ eat.

He's/ HUGE!

How many/ people have/ you killed?

I...I don't know. W hen the bloodlust comes, my mind becomes clouded. I don't like to kill. The dead haunt my dreams. I see the ir faces twisted, bodies broken. They moan to me like an eerie wind in the trees.

I see my mother, thin and whithered, dead of star vation. My father was a Krind chief. He tried to compromise with the Stygorons and when they laughed, he fought them. We are few. They took him, drug him, hung him, and let him rot.

My sister and I fled. The Baron's men men caught us. I slew one and escaped.

I went to the Krind's sacred place, where our Gods live, to ask guidance of the priest.

The Krind are lost my son. DROGIM, the moon avenger, is outraged. He wishes you to be his instrument. He wishes to possess your body and soul. If you accept DROGIM, together you can destroy the Stygorans.

Let it/ be!

Beware! His form will be imprinted upon you. He'll stay with you until death!

If the/ Krind are/ lost, let/ it be!

BEAST OF WOLFTON 5

8" line The priest gave me a potion, spoke many strange things and a spell was created.

2" column It is done! Remember, Drogim may only be expelled from your body through the willing love of a beautiful woman, which is improbable. Begone now and don't return. I go to see your father.

2¼ column I can only guess that the priest's death was a necessary part of the ritual, or that he did not wish to see what surely must come to pass.

2¼ column I returned to Wulv to rescue my sister, too late. Then began the feast of death.

2" column That fungous fool in the castle is the archenemy. He thinks he is safe behind those thick Stygoran walls. Wulv had many entrances and wolfton is built on Wulv.

Center Nyaaaaa! Ha, ha, ha!

3¼" column Prepare your men! All of them. It is time for extravagant action. The beast has taken lady Chabita from these very walls. Tomorrow, I shall lead you myself! BEGONE!

2¼" column 'sa goddamned shame! I should've never come to this forsaken land.

Center Clumsy oaf!

2½ column Hesitating a moment, the creature wondered whether to keep the relic.

2½ column It turned and threw the head out the window. Soon the beast was traveling on the road back to the country house. It stopped and listened. The sound of many hoofbeats came to him.

Center HYAAW! HYAAW!

Center Sir Hornib saw the barrier in time to halt. The squire and soldier didn't.

Eh?

Center What in HELL?

Center Are you the lady's husband?

DEMON!

1½" Slush right ragged left Sir Hornib lost consciousness for a few moments. His face was numb. His mouth was full of blood and broken teeth. He could only move his tongue and something was wrong with the bones of his face.

He was alone.

Paragraph Continued

BEAST OF WOLFTON 6

( ) — continued from p3 5

He died.

1-3/8" Column

Chabita looked around the house for a weapon. She found the soldier's ax and carried it to the upstairs room.

(

If the beast returned, she had a plan.

)

2 1/4" column

I thought you would leave. I didn't kill your husband. I'll take you to him if you wish.

2 1/4" column

Don't talk now. I grieve for your own losses. I know your desperation drove you to violence.

Center

Ouw!/ mmmm,/ slowly/ my love./ (ungh)/ deeper,/ aaaahh!

AAAH!

Center

I feel a/great relief.

Center

Drogim has/left me.

I like

It is good!

Center

DIE, venomous deformed/leper. Return to HELL!

2" column

Something malignant overcame lady Chabita. A foul dread, a fear from the pit of her hips.

(

Frantically, she dressed and ran into the dark abysmal forest.

)

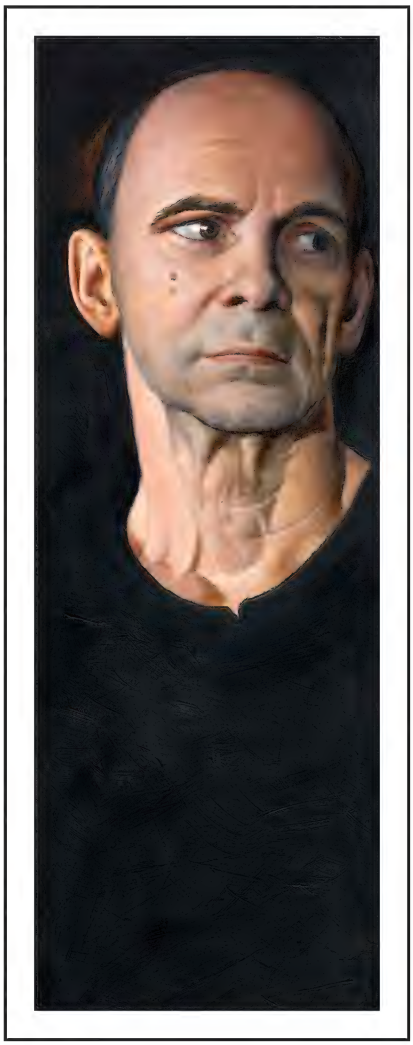
1 3/4" Much left ragged rgt.

She was founda couple days later, alive but utterly insane. Because of her noble heritage she was cared for in a convent of nuns. There she gave birth to a very strange child.

THE END

Richard Corben was born in Missouri and grew up in Sunflower, Kansas, a community that worked for the Sunflower Ordnance Works, an army plant that manufactured bombs in World War II.

Corben drew comics all of his life. An early effort was a series of comics about the adventures of TRAIL, the family dog. Later, he created imitations of Tarzan and Brothers of the Spear. He also showed a keen interest in animation by turning many pads of paper into animated flipbooks.



While attending the Kansas City Art Institute, he concentrated on basic drawing and painting, developing skills that would become vital in creating his chosen realistic style. At that time, his college offered no courses for animation, but by using his father's 8 mm movie camera, Corben nevertheless produced a 5-minute animated film highlighting the labors of Heracles as his senior project.

After graduation, Corben wanted to go to New York to launch a career in comics or animation, but he was shy and timid, and put off such a drastic move. After working in construction for his father for a while, he found a local job as an artist/animator/cameraman in a Kansas City industrial film company. During this time, despite his shyness, he found a girl to marry him.

After nearly ten years at the film company, Corben felt frustrated that he really hadn't given his art career a chance. He started drawing so-called "underground" comix and fanzines at night after working a full-time job during the day. About this same time, Warren Publishing Company began a series of black-and-white horror comics, CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA. This was a perfect match for Corben's interests, and he drew several stories for CREEPY on speculation. Unfortunately, none of these were accepted. But the "wannabe" comic book artist persisted and even met James Warren at a science fiction convention. Finally, Warren and his editor, Bill Dubay, relented and started sending Corben scripts to draw. At last, a foothold was established in his comic career. Even with the responsibilities of a wife, a daughter and a mortgage, the young artist now felt confident enough to quit his full-time job at the industrial film company and devote all his time to drawing.

The underground comix surge spread to Europe, and requests to reprint Corben underground features began to appear. His fantasy character, DEN, was created for the American underground comic, GRIM WIT; DEN was next printed in the French METAL HURLANT, and then printed in the American HEAVY METAL. During this era, Richard and Dona started FANTAGOR PRESS, a publishing company featuring Richard's comics. Unfortunately, the business wasn't enough to support them. Next, Corben began drawing for American comics—D.C., MARVEL, DARK HORSE, and others.

Corben believed that maintaining drawing skills required constant practice. He regularly attended life drawing classes all throughout his career. He found the activity both an ongoing challenge and a source of pleasure.

His love and interest in animation continued throughout his lifetime and motivated him to create digitally animated movies he shared on his web site and Facebook page.

Richard was married for 56 years to Dona, and is the father of watercolor artist and comic book colorist, Beth. His life and love was devoted to his family and his art. He was a humble man and an extremely kind, good man.

Richard Corben died December 2, 2020.

ROWLF™

AND OTHER FANTASY STORIES

RICHARD CORBEN

Well known for his legendary fantasy underground masterpieces published by Fantagor Press as well as *Heavy Metal*, Richard Corben's work has been recognized internationally having been awarded one of the most prestigious recognitions in comics literature the Grand Prix at Angoulême as well having been inducted into the Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame.

This, the next volume of the Richard Corben Library is a trilogy of werewolf stories. *Rowlf* is a postmodern take of *Beauty and the Beast* that mixes high fantasy with dystopian science fiction. It is the first masterpiece in Corben's long career. *The Beast of Wolfton* and its sequel *The Spirit of the Beast* are ironic love stories of a werewolf family saga. The book closes with a poignant free adaptation of one of the Japanese legends by Lafcadio Hearn called *The Story of Oteg*. All packaged in a beautiful new printing with meticulously restored artwork and featuring a new introduction by Hayao Miyazaki (*Spirited Away*).

"Corben is meta-cinematographic, wonderfully free from any inhibition, and seemingly without precedent or heir. Against all odds, he is the one who emerged from the American underground and nourished the imagination of authors worldwide, creating a momentum that combines genre comics with a spirit of rebellion resonating from France to Japan, Italy, and everywhere else.

His appearance had the effect of a true seismic event, transforming the landscape forever, with entire mountain ranges and oceans emerging under his influence, thanks to his talent and generous imagination."
–GUILLERMO DEL TORO

DARK HORSE BOOKS
FANTAGOR PRESS